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HENRY LYLE

OR

LIFE AND EXISTENCE.

BY EMILIA MARRYAT.

*Daughter of the late Captain Marryat.*

AUTHOR OF "TEMPER," &c.

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"The ignoble never *lived* ; they *were* awhile  
Like swine, or other cattle here on earth,  
Their names are not recorded on the file  
Or life that live so."

BEN JONSON.

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# HENRY LYLE.

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## CHAPTER I.

"HENERY!" screamed a sharp, shrill voice, from the top of a steep staircase; and a little child who owned a name something similar in sound to the scream, started as he heard it, and flushing a deep red over his before pallid face, rose from the stool where he had been sitting, to obey the call. His haste was unfortunate in its results, for in rising he threw from his lap the pencil and paper and other drawing materials which it had held; and he commenced hurriedly picking them up, when again the shrill sharp voice came down the stairs—"Henery!"

The voice was followed by the owner of it, and poor little Henry turned very pale again, more than naturally pale, as he saw the impersonation of the voice, his grand-aunt, appear at the door.

Miss Lyle was a rigid lady of fifty-five; very little indulgent to the weaknesses of childhood; very forgetful that she herself



had once been a child—if indeed she ever had been, which was difficult to believe—and that probably, at that period, she had been a much more unpleasant child than it would be easy again to find, judging by the style of woman which she had made.

“Henery!” she repeated, as she arrived at the door—for three syllables she always would make of poor little Henry’s name—“why on earth don’t you come when you are called?”

“I was coming, aunt,” commenced the child; but the sentence was prematurely choked by a good sound shaking, it being Miss Lyle’s method to inject morality into the mind by ejecting the breath out of the body. The child caught his breath as he was released from the lady’s clutches, and offered no further remonstrance. He was used to it, and had become—the most painful of all conditions for a child—callous to ill-usage.

But Miss Lyle was not to be pacified by patient endurance. Her eye fell upon the scattered articles which had fallen from Henry’s lap, and she exclaimed:

“Ah! that’s what you’ve been at again! I have told you before, I won’t have any scribbling or daubing, making the house in a litter; give them here!”

The child hesitated.

“Give them here!” repeated the lady, imperatively.

“I cannot, aunt,” said Henry, gathering up the beloved instruments of art, which consisted only of a pencil and three or four common little cakes of paint. Miss Lyle snatched up the little drawing which the child had been occupied in mak-



ing, and without troubling herself to glance at it, she tore it into pieces, and crumpled it into a ball.

Little Henry sighed as he saw the labor of a morning destroyed so recklessly ; but perhaps the thought occurred to him that he had yet in his possession the power of making many more such ; and he clutched the little hand in which the paints were held the tighter.

“ Give them here ! ” repeated Miss Lyle ; and the child answered again, “ I cannot, aunt,” as if the possibility of his complying with her request were beyond his conception. They were all his earthly treasure. Henry Lyle had lost his father and his mother ; all his playthings had been taken from him and burnt by his aunt, on the plea that they made a litter ; but he had still his dear drawing materials, and these he could not part with. Miss Lyle was a woman of determination, a woman of a strong mind, not caring for the absurd resistance of a child, and that a mere infant of five or six years old ; so it took her very little time to twist the paints and pencil out of Henry’s hand, which was by no means a strong one, and to toss them into the fire. This feat accomplished, and wound up by a box on the ears of Henry, *the lady* left the room.

But the cry of agony little Henry gave when he fully understood his loss ! The blow he endured patiently, but when the giddiness consequent upon it was over, and he saw the cruel fire instantaneously burning up the treasures of his heart, he clasped his little slight hands together, and it seemed to his baby imagination that thenceforth the world was to him a blank.



And who was Miss Lyle, who thus tortured a little soul placed in her care? A woman grown old in vanity and sin; tarnished by contact with the world, hardened by its evil influences. And the victim, over whom she had become self-constituted tyrant? A guileless miniature of the Almighty Image, fresh from God's hands; a living and palpable reproach in its innocence to such as Miss Lyle for their full-grown want of it; the model which was given to all to attain to, as being what they must resemble ere fit for that kingdom of which such as little Henry are.

Henry Lyle had no childhood such as loving parents make for little children. And yet he was happy in his way. His aunt was his tyrant, but the child dreamed and fancied, and drew his fancies upon paper, and was not sad or desponding. Certainly at times, if he caught the eye of Miss Lyle fixed upon him scrutinisingly, the little face would draw down into a gravity most un-babylike; but the gravity was soon forgotten when the cause was removed, and Henry was again a child—a thoughtless, uncareful, forgiving child—who would have kissed his tyrant the moment after she had maltreated him. So innocent a spirit cannot hold unhappiness.

The occasional money which he received at odd times was by Henry again saved up, and fresh paints and pencils were bought, which were kept more closely than the last, and, spite of all opposition, the beloved occupation was pursued.

Had Miss Lyle been possessed of any taste, or indeed any sense, she would have looked more nearly at the little child's artistic productions before so ruthlessly destroying them, al-



though, after all, perhaps, with such scrutiny, her ultimate acts might have been the same, for Miss Lyle despised anything that bordered upon a litter. Order was her idol; which extended, however, no further than mere outward arrangements, for we reckon, had any one looked within that stiff erection of flesh and bones, there would have been found a great deal of disorderly work, both in the heart and mind of the lady, which was often evidenced outwardly by her ill treatment of the helpless child committed to her charge, and her non-appreciation of what a mind in order would delight in.

But the way in which Henry Lyle became the charge of this rigid lady? As we have said, both his parents died when he was at an early age, and, as the child himself expressed it, "went to heaven, and left him behind." Miss Lyle had been very fond of the little dear during her nephew's lifetime; but then she saw the little dear only occasionally, and knew none of the trouble which young children necessarily must give to those who take care of them.

When her nephew Lyle died, his wife having gone before him, he entrusted his child to the care of his aunt, and thenceforth Miss Lyle adopted Henry as her own. She intended educating him; indeed, had commenced doing so; for was not Henry between five and six, and therefore fully competent to begin hard drudgery and endure the cares of life? With the adoption, of course Miss Lyle acquired the right of corporeal chastisement; also a most necessary ingredient in the education of a very young child.

Also with the adoption, for we must not forget the rights as



well as the wrongs of the case, Miss Lyle intended making Henry her heir ; but this was dependent upon his own conduct. If he displeased her, of course he forfeited her will, and meanwhile, Miss Lyle had not only the approval of her own easily-satisfied conscience, but the loud encomiums for generosity on the part of the various toadies or satellites whom her *income* had made her devoted allies.

Miss Lyle was possessed of a moderate fortune, and the child had nothing prospectively : for his father had left but a small sum sufficient only for his education. This fact the lady impressed upon Henry's mind before he hardly understood the meaning of £ s. d.

We have said that Miss Lyle was attended in her earthly rotation by satellites. In their eyes she could do no wrong, or perhaps, speaking more strictly according to *their words*, she was faultless ; and with them there was no appeal from the harshness of his grand-aunt for poor little Henry.

There was one word which was associated with his earliest years which was repeated in tones of warning to him constantly. It was a word which indicated a quality to be abhorred, or, to the child's imagination, a vice to be shunned. That word was Independence. The child was told, at no age at all, that the besetting sin of his dead father had been this. Independently he had lived, married, suffered, and died. He had never complained, and never asked for anything, until he left his child unfriended, and asked for the infant what he would not have demanded for himself. Independence had been the ruin of the elder Lyle, and Miss Lyle determined, from the very com-



mencement of her authority over Henry, to curb into proper submission of spirit any such tendency as the child might display towards freedom of thought and opinion.

Miss Lyle had no knowledge of human nature ; not a particle. It is strange, how many there are living, with the great book hourly open before their eyes, and every experience of life calling to the study, who never to their last day learn the universally necessary lesson ; who seem to close their eyes wilfully, and stop their ears, lest observation should make them wise, as if fearing to be made more human, and fitter to live in a natural world.

Certes, Miss Lyle might justly have started back, reluctant to commence, when the first page presented for her perusal was herself, had she better understood the meaning of it ; but she was unaware how repulsive such a commencement was, for by her circle of acquaintances she had been written in characters of Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin ; anything but plain English. The quality we have alluded to was inherent in Henry Lyle, as it had been in his father, in all its native nobility, but it was undeveloped, unknown to Henry himself until his grand-aunt coerced his gentle spirit into the very path she strove to force him from attempting.



## CHAPTER II.

MISS LYLE was in the habit of considering herself a lady, yet she was not careful of the language that she used ; and Henry, from his earliest days, had vivid pictures passing through his mind of unfeminine violence and displays of temper, painful to associate with what should have been the type of gentleness and grace.

“Look, aunt, look at the clouds ! they are red, like blood. Is God angry ?” asked Henry, at a very early stage of his acquaintance with Miss Lyle ; and the latter answered sharply :

“Don’t talk of such ridiculous things, child ;” and, turning to Miss Wigginson, her most constant attendant, she remarked to that spinster, “I really believe the boy is an idiot.”

“Yes, indeed, ’m ; he talks like it, ’m.”

Now Miss Wigginson had never thought for a moment whether little Henry was an idiot or otherwise, but as Miss Lyle suggested such might be the case, of course Miss Wig-



ginson coincided in the opinion, and reaped the benefit of the admission in being allowed to disentangle some knots which had contracted in Miss Lyle's netting by that lady's own carelessness.

"What is an idiot?" asked Henry Lyle, some hours afterwards, of one of the servants; and the explanation given, set him wondering. Henry did not venture any hypothetical opinions as to the clouds again in his aunt's presence, but he did not therefore escape her imputations. His slate was almost always returned to him with the sum half effaced to be re-added up, accompanied by the monosyllable "Fool!"

"I do not think I am a fool," ventured the child, the first time he was so addressed; but he received a cuff on the head for the contradiction of his superior, and an extra number of the sums he hated. Miss Lyle was too stultified by the rebellion of her charge to make any reproof in words, but she was supported by an indignant chorus of attendant spirits.

"Henry, for shame! If your good aunt says you are a fool, you are a fool."

When Miss Lyle's heavy hand was raised to strike the fragile child, who looked as if he might have been broken in two by that gaunt woman, did no memory ever rise before her mind to check the blow, and make her harshness appear in its true light, as an impiety? Had she quite forgotten that darkened room wherein she stood, not more than a twelvemonth since, where lay the shadow of the handsome Lyle, who she had ever prophesied would "come to a bad end?"

Of the badness of his end we will not question. Such a



term means, with persons like Miss Lyle, that the one so prophesied of shall meet with an early death—death being the greatest imaginable evil, as indeed it may probably be, to them.

That room, relieved alone by the subdued burning of a shaded lamp, which seemed to fall only upon the face of the young man, and throw the grim figure of his aunt into greater gloom, giving to *him* so spiritual a look that Miss Lyle, who was of the earth earthly, shrank, she knew not why, from contact with the half angel, from the glance of those great lustrous eyes, and felt a cold shudder pass through her frame as she took the damp thin hand held out to her, and listened to the voice so changed since last she had heard it, buoyant with manliness and health.

Yet, when Miss Lyle had been summoned to her nephew's death-bed unexpectedly—for he had but a few days since landed in England—she had fortified herself to meet a scene of tears and lamentations, of vain regrets for youth suddenly snapped asunder, and hopeless mournings at the approach of Death.

Death was a thing which Miss Lyle ever avoided thinking of. She would not associate it with herself. She hated to hear that her friends were dead, not because of their loss, but it made the whole thing unpleasantly real. She always had avoided sick houses: a death-bed she had hoped never to see, and now it was forced upon her.

But Lyle made no such display of alarm as his aunt thought must necessarily be experienced. The visionary and ridiculous



ideas, as Miss Lyle had ever considered them, which from boyhood her nephew had entertained against the oppositions of worldly policy, seemed strangely to have acquired solidity, and to have grown into sure bases upon which to rest.

Miss Lyle understood none of these things : she had looked upon them as poetical absurdities. She detested poetry, and now she could not but blindly, yet silently, wonder at the calm assurance of her nephew as he pressed to his dying breast the boy who was his sole remaining earthly treasure, after the formally given promise of Miss Lyle that she would protect the child.

Lyle had a claim upon his aunt to demand thus much for his child at her hands, and so she knew. "And you will never forget your father, and will think of his last words to you, Harry," said Lyle, earnestly looking into the face of his son. "You will strive to lead the life of a Christian, and wrestle manfully and independently with the difficulties of the world ; for it is a painful world, my boy. Your father has found it so, and I fear with your father's blessing you will inherit his cares."

And little Harry, with the soft action of a woman, smoothed the hair from off his father's forehead, and kissed him, and promised, with his blue eyes wide open, with solemnity, while Miss Lyle did not know exactly what to do ; she felt herself out of place—and she, wearing the form of a woman !—as she looked at the prostrate figure of the dying young man, with the little fair-haired, graceful child bending over it, and she wondered that the infant was not afraid. The child was not afraid.



even when he saw his father die, but he followed the direction of his eyes upwards, and unconsciously clasped his own little hands as the elder Lyle did so.

Miss Lyle found it very difficult to answer the numerous questions put to her most logically by her new charge, as to why he still, as he thought, saw his father, and yet was told he had gone to heaven. She became tired after a time, and ceased attempting to answer them at all, so that Henry Lyle was left to draw upon his own poetical resources for a solution of all these things, and, perhaps, came to more correct conclusions with his own angel-taught childishness than he would have done from the explanations of his grand-aunt.

Thus the death of Henry's father grew a thing to be remembered only formally as an event, excepting by his child, who dwelt upon that evening of his life as the great spot between his careless happiness and his grand-aunt—the division between his being allowed to ask questions and their always meeting with replies, and his yearning for information being cooled. Miss Lyle never reiterated to the boy the dying words of his father, yet they were distinctly remembered with a chivalrous feeling on the part of the child, that his father's principles had differed from the feelings of those now around him, and that it was his duty to defend them. So that when Miss Wigginson once took upon herself to lecture little Henry, he bore the scolding very patiently until the lady made an allusion to the dead Lyle, as "your poor papa, who never would take advice, and therefore suffered for it; and if you are not careful, Henry, you also will come to a bad end." Henry inquired



why his father was obliged to take the advice of others when he was doing rightly? and why was he to be called poor? and what did Miss Wigginson mean by coming to a bad end? and did she intend to say that his father had done wrong in going to heaven? All which questions were asked with such volubility that the lecturer scarcely knew how to answer, and took refuge in telling Henry that he was a very naughty boy, which latter charge her opponent denied flatly, standing with his legs very far apart, not being endued with respect for the satellite: and afterwards that bright particular star retailed to Miss Mangles, her familiar, the whole of the conversation, observing that she could make nothing of the child, he was so queer that she was half afraid of him, and was sure he would never live, particularly as he had a blue vein across his forehead; in which opinion Miss Mangles, being sub-toady to Miss Wigginson, cordially and enthusiastically agreed.



## CHAPTER III.

HENRY LYLE received an excellent school education, and from early youth worked in earnest at every study which was presented to him. He was ambitious and energetic in every mental race, and carried off the prizes apparently so easily, that his competitors were astonished, but withal so unassumingly, that he did not lose his friends, but changed them into admirers besides—all, excepting one. He gained the age of seventeen, and his chief desire, his longing ambition, was to go to college. But Miss Lyle understood no such feelings on the part of her protege. He had learnt to read, write, and arithmeticise; what more was requisite? Not that poor Henry, with all his love of learning, was much of an arithmetician—figures were not in his line; and so Miss Lyle determined upon Henry's adopting, at the age of seventeen, a position of her choosing. He should be a banker's clerk. It was a most respectable situation, a rising situation, one which would be



come lucrative. So, one day, after concluding his last quarter at school, when Henry returned home, yet uncertain what was to be his next circumstance, he was informed by Miss Lyle of the profession to which she intended binding him.

“So,” concluded the lady, “you will have to abandon all your scribbling”—for Henry Lyle was addicted to covering foolscap paper—“and your painting and what not, and become a steady young man. I have arranged everything already for you. You have only to——”

“To mount the three-legged stool,” interrupted Henry. “Have you really settled it already, aunt?”

Miss Lyle looked sharply at him.

“What now?” said she, “do not you like your profession? I suppose you would wish to be a gentleman at large—eh?”

“No,” he answered, “were I to choose my employment, I would be a painter.”

“A painter!” echoed his aunt, contemptuously, “don’t be a fool; I should like to see you a painter, indeed; you had better try it.”

“When am I to commence?” asked Henry, submissively.

“Next month; next week, if you can. In fact, I see no reason why you should make any delay. You had best commence at once. But mind you, Henry, I expect you to keep to your employment. I’ll have no chopping and changing, if you please.”

“I will if I can, certainly,” the boy answered.

“I just wish to say to you beforehand,” resumed Miss Lyle, “that as this is the profession I have chosen for you, I expect



you to remain steadily at it. You will have, of course, to give up all your present absurd fancies. You are aware that your father did not leave you much money ; in fact, no more than sufficient to educate you until now, and to place you in a profession."

"I know it," said Henry, rather haughtily. "I ought to know it," he added, probably thinking of the oftentimes he had by his aunt been taunted with the fact.

"That now will be expended when the premium for your new office is paid. There is now left sufficient only to set you going. After that, your course in the world will be dependent upon your own exertions ; for it will be according to your future conduct that I make you my heir or not, remember."

Henry Lyle's face flushed, perhaps his lip curled, and he asked :

"Am I not then yet indebted to you for anything but your——protection of me while a child?"

"I do not know what you mean sir," answered his aunt. "You have as yet been educated with the money which your father left for that purpose."

He had risen as he spoke, but, upon her answer, reseated himself and sighed, as if relieved.

"I will enter upon my new situation whenever you please, aunt," said he. "When does Mr. Grant expect me?"

Miss Lyle looked a little surprised at the reaction in her nephew's manner, but she was satisfied with his acquiescence, and replied :

"Well, Henry, I think you had better begin next week,



I see no use in wasting time; I will myself write to Mr. Grant this evening, and next Monday—let me see, this is Wednesday—yes, next Monday you will be ready.”

Henry bowed his head in compliance, and placing his hands in his pockets, sauntered out of the house. Somehow, Miss Lyle felt a little in awe of the child whom she used to knock about and slap. It was not entirely because, though still a boy in years, he had grown to the height of a man—it was not that there was anything imperious, or unyielding, or authoritative in Henry’s manner—he was none of these. He was too quiet, too gentle, and too reflective. These were what galled Miss Lyle. When he raised his eyes and fixed them on her, after a tirade of words on her part, she knew that she was lowered by the contrast, she felt uncomfortable, and fidgeted about the room. When he spoke, though his voice was low, and his manner gentle and self-possessed, she would not have cared to have interrupted him. She felt it a relief when her nephew left the house, even though he had been perfectly silent whilst in it. Miss Lyle could battle with the most wordy, and fight it out with the most vixenish; but she could neither argue nor listen to reason. She knew her nephew to be her superior in every respect, and she felt afraid of him. One might see it by the compressed lip, by the nervous twitching of the mouth, even when sitting silently in the room with him. Miss Lyle was an uneducated woman, who had, by her woman’s tact, contrived to pass through life without any unusual manifestation of ignorance. To most she appeared but an ordinary person, not distinguishable certainly for mental



acquirements, but in no way deficient. But of her real deficiency she was herself aware. She had native cleverness enough to know it, but not energy sufficient to remove her ignorance.

Henry Lyle, boy as he was, was her superior in acquirements, in education, but much more in capacity. She could have forgiven his being better instructed, but not his better judgment, his higher standard of thought. She could not forget his superiority of moral culture, and feeling herself sink in his presence, even by the calm silence and reflective look of the student, Miss Lyle began to hate the boy she had promised to protect and cherish: the more as now she dared not treat him with rudeness or contempt.

If Henry Lyle had at random drawn his profession, as he might have drawn a ticket out of Fortune's wheel, he could not have gained a more entirely unsuitable one to him. It was not in his nature to sit upon a three-legged stool. Yet day after day he went to town—for Miss Lyle lived in a cottage in the suburbs of London—day after day he copied rows of figures, with his thoughts wandering away, very recreant to his employment. His face grew graver, but not more business-like. There was an utter want of calculation in the formation of that head; and often his work was doubled to him by the confusion in which his brains were sent whirling by the maddening little crooked pieces of importance which drive so many to their ruin, and harden the hearts of more.

Messrs. Garrett and Grant were not half satisfied with their new clerk. Several times Mr. Grant discovered him leaning



abstractly over the desk, the ledger-book thrust aside, and the pen busily employed doing what office pens were never meant to do—sketching imaginary scenes; while young Lyle's face wore an expression of animation which no pounds, shillings, and pence would ever have communicated to it.

At such times Mr. Grant would speak sharply to the young man to recall his attention to his orthodox employment, and Lyle would start, having quite forgotten for the moment that it was an office desk he leaned against, an office pen he drew with, and that he was etching on the office paper. He would then, with a checked sigh, return to his dreary employment, but Mr. Grant would shake his head, and inwardly augur or outwardly prophesy to his partner, Mr. Garrett, that young Lyle would never make a man. To look at him, as he grew paler every day, so tall for his age and so much too slight, many others also might have prophesied the same, although meaning differently to the sense of Mr. Grant.

Miss Lyle never noticed it though. She had gained Henry's compliance with her plan, and she saw very little of him, and ever seemed possessed with a fear he should be too late, so that she employed herself every morning in hurrying his departure.

One day Mr. Grant, during an interview with Miss Lyle, upon that lady's inquiring of him how her grand-nephew progressed in his situation, expressed his opinion that the office was very unsuited to young Lyle's turn of mind, and his fear that he would never succeed in business-life so long as his mind was so preoccupied, as it evidently was, with other subjects. Miss Lyle received the information rigidly, as usual, without



much comment ; but when Henry returned home that night she eyed him with more than her wonted disfavor, and before long she took an opportunity of mentioning Mr. Grant's visit of the morning, and his allusions to himself in the quality of his new office.

Henry Lyle had borne the confinement of the office for weeks patiently and silently, but he was more galled by his chains from the enforced silence, and now, breaking through all former considerations, which had hitherto kept him constant at his supposed hard duty, he enforced what Mr. Grant had said without reserve—contemning his employment, representing his unfitness in every way for his profession, his detestation of it, and his utter inability to pursue it much longer. Miss Lyle heard him with indignation, as he warmly expatiated on the drudgery of the office-stool ; but she did not attempt to interrupt the eloquent flow of words which the young man poured forth. She heard him with suppressed wrath, and at the conclusion of his speech demanded :

“And pray what do you imagine would suit your exalted ideas, sir ?”

“I have before this told you my wishes,” he replied ; “I would be a painter.”

“Then be a painter,” said Miss Lyle, “but be a painter on your own account, if you please. I'll have no vagabond, idle, good-for-nothing fellows tacked on to me. Go and be a painter ; I have done with you. Since you are so mighty independent, make your own bread ; you shall not eat mine.”

“Have I hitherto lived at your expense ?” asked Henry. “I



thought you told me, not very long ago, that until now I had not been any burden to you in a pecuniary way?"

Miss Lyle tossed her head as she answered :

"Nor shall you, sir, ever. I am not yet in my second childhood."

From that hour, Henry Lyle breathed anew ; a new feeling of independence animated him. Henceforth he would be indebted to no one—even for the discomforts of a roof such as his grand-aunt had accorded him. He would live on his own account. Live, or——starve. The latter probability did not enter into Henry's calculations. It does not in the mind of an enthusiastic boy of seventeen, with strength, health, above all, mental capacity. In early youth we think failure an impossibility : the consciousness of mental strength is all-buoyant—all-sanguine. We imagine that with intellect we can never starve ; and so thought Henry Lyle.

His aunt abused him roundly as a parting gift, accusing him of that most unpardonable offence to elderly people—and especially to her—independence. But, somehow, Henry did not seem to take the accusation as an insult now. It was his new-born glory, and would have been his boast, only that he was naturally too modest to make a boast of any self-possession.

Mr. Grant spoke to him very kindly before he left Miss Lyle's unpleasant abode, regretting much that he should lose sight of him, and telling him to apply to himself should he ever be in any difficulty ; a kindness which Henry Lyle fully appreciated, and felt in the manner it was intended. But Mr. Grant gave more substantial proof of his good wishes by insist-



ing that Henry Lyle should receive back again at least a good part of the sum paid as his premium, without which accommodation, despicable as filthy lucre is, and is acknowledged to be, Henry would have found himself rather inconvenienced, with no property but his independence.

Miss Lyle knew too well the disposition of her nephew to expect that he would draw back at the last, and return to his original position; yet, when the time came for Henry's departure, she acted as if she had been greatly ill treated by his obstinate course of conduct. She spoke of undutifulness, ingratitude, and such words which make the hearers feel doubtful and uncomfortable, and which are much too freely used by some who do not pause to think previously what claim they have upon duty or gratitude from those they accuse. Henry thanked her for what she had done for him, magnifying, in his own regret at what had happened, her occasional kindness or forbearance; but unluckily, before quitting, he made an allusion to the new profession he should adopt, expressing a hope that he should earn an honest and honourable livelihood.

Miss Lyle's prejudices reawakened in a moment, and she parted from her nephew with a frigid touch of the hand, and no expressed desire of seeing him again. When, some months later, Henry Lyle wrote to his grand-aunt, hoping she still felt some interest in his movements, there was in the letter no humility of regret at having left the comforts of her house, no servility of tone such as others usually kept towards her. The letter was hopeful, youthful—more, *independent*; and Miss Lyle tossed it into the fire, and condescended no answer.



Henry did not write again ; for, amongst the qualities of his heart, he had that very usual accompaniment of energy and ambition, pride ; and he made a mistake in ranking it as a necessary one. He then imagined that it was a part of his independence ; but later in life Henry Lyle grew wiser.

Mr. Grant, his late superior, had expressed a wish to know of young Lyle's movements occasionally ; and Henry, whose heart was ever ready to overflow with gratitude for kindness, reciprocated warmly the friendship expressed towards him.

The senior partner in the bank was but a name only—and, shortly after Lyle's removal from the influence of the ledger, became not even that—and Henry's friend and well-wisher was the sole possessor of the bank.

Miss Lyle did not regret the absence of her nephew. It was a sort of relief to her that he was gone, and she had ever-ready listeners in those who surrounded her to whom she could retail again and again, as one of her household narratives, the kindness and tenderness shown to her protege, and the insolent and ungrateful return which he had made ; to which was almost invariably made the same reply by one or other of the sympathising audience, which helped to flatter the old lady in her opinion of herself.

“ Well, so it is always ; that is the return one gets for kindness in this world ; but, however, ingratitude will meet with its punishment.” Which latter arrangement seemed always to give unlimited satisfaction to the whole conclave.

Mr. Grant never lost sight of young Lyle. He noticed all his struggles on the road to fortune or misfortune ; assisted him



by advice, and at times more tangibly than by mere words. Henry's first successful picture became the property of Mr. Grant, and the latter gentleman grew to look upon his young friend as one of the most talented men of the day. By-the-by, the banker knew nothing whatever about painting, and would have equally admired the merest signboard daub done by a personal friend ; which spoke more forcibly for the real interest he took in Henry Lyle



## CHAPTER IV.

"AND what is the use of that, my dear?" inquired Mrs. Leigh of her daughter, as Augusta was very busily trying to teach herself some mysterious new stitch. "You have been more than an hour over those needles," continued her mother; "how you do waste your time, child."

"I hope not, mamma. I did not think I was wasting time in learning anything."

"You most certainly are doing so in learning what is useless," replied Mrs. Leigh. "To what purpose do you intend putting your present employment?"

"I do not know," answered Augusta, abstractedly. "I was learning it for the sake of teaching myself against difficulties, or for the sake of learning,—anything. I do not think time can be wasted, mamma, in such a manner."

"You are an odd child, I must say," returned Mrs. Leigh; "one would think you were intending to go out as a governess,



or a maid-of-all-work, by your anxiety to know everything. Have you any intention of settling in Australia?" inquired the lady, laughingly.

"Not at present, dear mamma," answered Augusta, in the same manner. "I hope I shall never be obliged to do so. I always think," continued she, resuming her former quiet manner, "that I may some day live to regret not having learnt anything which now I may acquire. At least, it can do no harm to be capable of doing things which may never have to be brought into requisition."

"You have become philosophical, Gussy, which sounds very appropriate, no doubt, at the age of fifteen. You have been learning it of your cousin Philip. I should like to know what my mother would have said to me had I, at your age, talked in such a way. Why, she would have stared with astonishment, and probably boxed my ears."

"Yes, I have learnt a great deal of my cousin Philip," answered Augusta, "although, probably, he, as well as you, mamma, would laugh at my taking so much trouble about this embroidery, particularly as I am afraid my earnestness in following it up is owing chiefly to his having said I should never do it."

Shortly afterwards, Augusta Leigh exclaimed suddenly, with some degree of triumph.

"I have succeeded, mamma!"

Mrs. Leigh smiled at her daughter's animated pleasure in such a trifling acquisition, and at the same moment there entered a young man of prepossessing appearance. He was probably not



above one-and-twenty years of age, frank-looking, with brown hair, brown eyes, and a brown complexion; an easy way of holding himself, and a free-and-easy way of doing everything, which partook both of the impudence of the schoolboy and the grace of the gentleman. This was cousin Philip, who, on his entrance, kissed his aunt and then his cousin with the familiarity of an old playmate.

"You can't do it, Gussy," said he, as he observed the young girl's employment. "You will never do it."

"Will I not?" answered she; "and what if I have learnt to do it already—eh, Master Phil?"

The young man looked at the work she held in her hand with unfeigned admiration.

"You are a clever girl to be sure, Gussy," said he. "I fear there was some malice, though, in your learning it so fast."

"Only to prove to you that I could; or rather, because I had said I could. Do you think I am going to be baffled by a needle and thread?" said Gussy, with the air of a Cæsar.

Philip Wilson laughed immoderately.

"My dear little girl," he commenced, for being still very young himself, of course he patronised his cousin, "that action was capital. You are independence itself. You are a female Hercules. I wish I had your spirit of determination." And the young man threw himself indolently into a seat, and brushed his hair from his forehead.

"Indeed I wish you had, my dear," said Mrs. Leigh, shaking her head, half reproachfully, half fondly, at her brother's child; for Philip was an idle boy, who liked to take the world



very easily, and seemed to have overlooked the fact that labour is man's duty as well as his heritage, whatever his position or prospects—a duty from which he cannot escape uninjured. Of course Philip Wilson laughed, as he had always been used to do, as if the idea was an amusing one, and he inquired of his cousin about her other pursuits.

Augusta Leigh was no more than a schoolgirl in age, but she was in many respects a woman. Being an only child, she had always been the companion of grown people; her ideas were much advanced beyond her age, and throughout her composition there was a touch of independence, which was rather combated by Mrs. Leigh, but on the part of Augusta's father was gloried in, brought forward on all occasions, and encouraged in every way. Augusta Leigh was naturally clever, and Mr. Leigh considered her a prodigy of acquirements and accomplishments. True, even at this time she sang very sweetly to her guitar, and without apparent effort possessed herself of accomplishments.

Mr. Leigh had served for many years in the Royal Navy, had seen a great deal of hard life, had partly spoiled his health, but yet, at the age of sixty, he was no further than a lieutenant, retired on half-pay, not from want of merit, but from want of any interest to push him forward. Of this fact the old sailor was painfully aware, and you could not give Mr. Leigh a greater pleasure than in affording him an opportunity of roundly abusing the present system in the service, or more mortally offend him than in taking upon yourself the task of abusing it on your own responsibility. His life was a griev-



ance, and men love their grievances, at least if we may judge by the tenacity with which they dwell upon them.

Augusta was her father's perfection. To him she could never be wrong. Her life had been one of uninterrupted sunshine and peace, if such a thing *can* be; and at the age of fifteen her leading feelings were a devoted love towards the father who had ever been indulgence itself to her, a mitigated feeling of the same kind towards Mrs. Leigh, for her mother certainly came second in Augusta's loves, and a very warm affection for her cousin Philip.

But as years went on, other feelings rose in the heart of Augusta Leigh, without displacing or weakening those we have mentioned. Taught by that cousin Philip, who seemed ever to mix himself with all her life, she learnt to love reading, to reverence literature, and to bring into practice that spirit of inquiry which will be satisfied by knowledge only.

Mrs. Leigh died when her daughter had reached her eighteenth year, and Augusta wept for her first grief with the violence and the brevity of a child.

Mr. Leigh soothed his daughter, and strove to divert her mind by change of scene. They left the neighbourhood where Augusta's childhood had been spent, and at the time when our interest in them commences, Mr. Leigh and his daughter were residing in a small house in an inexpensive quarter of the metropolis.



## CHAPTER V.

“WHO is this Henry Lyle of whom Phil is always speaking? Really, Gussy, he must be a very extraordinary personage, from all we hear of him,” said Mr. Leigh to his daughter, at the end of a long speech on the part of Philip Wilson, in which the expression, “Henry Lyle says,” had been several times introduced.

“Oh no, uncle, he is not; but you see, when one lives so much with a man, one gets to quoting him,” said the young man.

“And *one* bores *one's* friends with his name continually—eh, Phil? But to my question: who is Henry Lyle? and how did you become acquainted with him?”

“He lives in the room above me, and we met, I believe, first upon our mutual staircase.”

“And who is he?” redemanded the old officer.

“A gentleman,” replied Philip. “He is a painter by profession.”



"A painter!" exclaimed Mr. Leigh; and there was in the exclamation so strong a dash of contempt, that Philip Wilson added, rather indignantly, as if feeling that the respectability of his friend was in question:

"An artist, uncle, not a house-painter, and, moreover, Lyle is a very clever man: he took to painting from love of the art, although he would have no right to make any such excuse for having done so; for surely an artist's is as gentlemanly a profession as any other."

"I did not say it was not, youngster, did I? Don't fire up so in defence of your friend, although you are quite right, too," said the uncle. "And so you and this fellow are great friends all at once?"

"Not all at once, for I have known him some months now. Really, uncle, I must bring Lyle here: you would not laugh at him if you knew him."

"He is a rising genius, then?—one of your clever young chips, who knows better than any of those older than himself—eh?"

"I shall not answer any more of your questions," said Philip, a little sulkily.

"Well, bring your friend here, Phil, and let us judge for ourselves. Come, come, never mind my laughing. I dare say he is a very creditable acquaintance, and able to contradict his grandfather, and set him right in his arithmetic."

"I should not think he was capable of doing any such thing," answered Philip.

"Well, you can, my boy, if he cannot, and birds of a feather, you know, flock together."



"Lyle is not of my feather, however, sir, and I do not admit the truth of that proverb you have quoted, for we generally find that the instances of greatest friendship have been between individuals of opposing qualities. Indeed——"

"That will do, Phil, my good fellow; let us have no metaphysics, if you please. I wish young people of the present day would not argue everything."

"Or weigh everything, uncle—which is it?" said Philip, regaining his good humour. "I knew you would consider it heterodoxy in me to question an old saw or proverb."

"I think young people are very self-conceited and pedantic. Weigh everything! One would think I was talking to a grocer, or—a moral philosopher," said Mr. Leigh, laughing very much at his own wit.

Philip Wilson laughed also, as the only way of ending the conversation, which he was afraid would grow into a dispute with the testy old officer, who considered that a man's acquirements and capabilities depended entirely upon his age, and consequently that every man of sixty must be better calculated to give an opinion than one of forty would be, from the fact of having lived twenty years longer in the world, however those twenty years had been spent.

"Will you walk with us this evening, Philip?" asked Augusta of her cousin, as the men ceased their conversation, and there seemed to threaten a rather unpleasant silence.

"This evening?" demanded Wilson. "I wish I could, Gussy; but I am sorry to say that I have promised to go out with Lyle."



"What a pity!" commenced Augusta; and her father interrupted her with—

"Of course you stand no chance now, Gussy; Mr. Lyle has cut you out entirely. Philip must go with his friend."

"Could you not bring Mr. Lyle here instead? Papa says he wishes to see him. We shall get jealous, you know, if he keeps you away from us," said Augusta, laughingly.

And Philip Wilson returned, laughing also, as if the idea pleased him extremely:

"Do be jealous, Gussy, dear. I should like to quarrel, for the sake of making it up afterwards."

"Are you so very fond of this Mr. Lyle though, Philip?" asked Augusta,

"Yes; he is a very good fellow."

"And what have you been doing all day, Mr. Phil?" presently inquired Mr. Leigh, who had been looking at the young man as he conversed with Augusta, and nursed his own leg, after the manner of men.

"Oh, sir," answered the nephew, "I have been all the morning in Lyle's studio, watching him paint, and talking philosophy."

"Talking fiddlesticks!" laughed the old gentleman. "Why did not you occupy yourself, instead of looking at another man's work? You are an idle fellow, Phil, and try to carry it off with philosophy."

"Well, I am afraid I am, uncle," said Philip Wilson, good humouredly. He had for years taken the fact with the same good humour. He did not attempt to deny it.



Philip Wilson had been an only child, a spoilt child, until the age of fifteen or sixteen, when his mother, his only remaining parent died. Since then he had been his own master. The money for which his father had worked descended upon him, neatly arranged in columns of figures, without the slightest trouble or exertion. He chose to send himself to Oxford when he attained a suitable age ; and notwithstanding the oft-repeated advice of his uncle and aunt, he chose to occupy his time in doing nothing but dream.

It was in vain that Mr. Leigh represented to him that his income, which would just keep him as a gentleman, would not be sufficient to maintain a wife and family, should he ever marry, and urged him to follow some profession, in order to increase it. Philip tried once or twice to work, but his want of perseverance made him throw it up, or his habitual indolence caused him to neglect his duty, and he returned to the energetic idleness of his daily life, in which we again now find him.

"Some day I'll be a rich man, see if I am not," he would say, laughing. "I'll go out to Australia, uncle, and make an enormous fortune, and come back with an enormous beard."

"Not you, my fine fellow ; you would never get on in Australia, with your lazy habits," Mr. Leigh would answer.

"Why should I work ?" the young man would ask.

"Because, Philip, work is your duty. We were not intended to be idle and useless. I have worked in my day." And the old officer would draw himself up at the recollection, which would make Philip laugh again, and say :



"And nobody showed any gratitude for your having done so, my dear uncle, which is a great shame."

"And what philosophy did your friend talk, Philip?" asked Augusta. "This friend of yours must be very learned and awful."

"I cannot enter into the subject again, dear," said he; ask Lyle himself. My uncle would 'pshaw!' and 'pish!' if I attempted anything of the kind."

"I wish you would bring Mr. Lyle here, Philip," returned Augusta. "You are always raising our curiosity to the most painful height without gratifying it. I have asked you several times to bring him with you. Now, will you this evening?"

Philip Wilson looked rather oddly, and Augusta added:

"Have you any objection to introducing him?"

"Objection! Of course not. Well, I will try again." He laughed, and then said, "The fact is Gussy, I have tried several times to bring Lyle here, but he won't come."

Not only Augusta, but Mr Leigh looked up in surprise, and the young man added:

"Lyle is so dreadfully shy; he will not go anywhere amongst strangers."

"Oh, do try to bring him, Philip, said his cousin. I am sure he need not be afraid of coming to us. Tell him that we expect him here this evening. I will not speak to him if he looks afraid of me."

Philip Wilson laughed, and presently left them.

That evening his knock was again heard at the door, and Augusta exclaimed, with some degree of excitement, for her life with her father had been hitherto so monotonous as to make a



fresh introduction into their circle an event of interest, "I wonder if Mr. Lyle is also come!"

Philip's step bounded up the staircase, and another followed his, not so quickly, but perhaps more firmly. Wilson threw open the door, and as he entered, said, "Uncle Leigh, I have brought my friend, in order to make him known to you and Augusta. Gussy, let me introduce Mr. Lyle."

Augusta curtseyed, and Mr. Leigh held out his hand to the young man, who bowed and stood still; and Wilson had to rattle on in his usual way to fill up the gap in the conversation. Mr. Lyle said a few words about the pleasure of the new acquaintanceship, but it was very gravely that he did so; and after a few moments, Mr. Leigh and Philip Wilson were the principal talkers, so that when the evening was over and their guests departed, Mr. Leigh observed to his daughter:

"Philip's friend does not appear to have much in him."

"He does not talk much, certainly," answered Augusta, "but——"

"But what missy?"

"Philip said, you remember, that Mr. Lyle is very shy."

"Or very stupid, Gussy!"

"No, papa; I do not think he is stupid. He does not look so."

Gussy seemed prejudiced in Mr. Lyle's favour, for she afterwards, in talking of him to her cousin, was very ready to make excuses for his silence, and requested Philip to bring him again.

"Was he comfortable the other evening with us?" she added;

"did he find it stupid and dull?"



"He did not say so," Wilson answered.

"Will he dislike coming to us again, do you think, Philip? Did he say anything about my father, or about us at all?"

"He did not make any remark, my dear cousin, to me about you, which I suppose is what you wish to know," said Philip, laughing. "He does not, I believe, care generally for female society; and I doubt whether he remarked even your personal appearance. Lyle, I am afraid, is a very rude man; he does not properly appreciate the value of your charming sex, Gussy. Do you find him sink in your opinion?" continued Wilson.

"I do not know that he ever had my opinion," returned Augusta, "so that he cannot be lowered in it. You need not bring him again then, if he dislikes coming."

Henry Lyle was a very remarkable looking man. It was not that either his figure or his face was perfect. He was too slight for his height, and too grave looking for his years. His hair was light brown, and his eyes were gray; and although his mouth was a beautiful one, his nose did not belong to any strict school of noses. Yet he was a very remarkable-looking man; and none who met the full gaze of those shy-looking eyes of his could help acknowledging it. His forehead was broad just above the brows almost to a fault, which took off from the oval shape of his face; but the defect, if it could by any overstrained criticism be so called, was a good deal corrected by his hair, which grew more wildly than fashion would dictate. His voice was positively plaintive, but so gently so, that at first his hearers might not know what it was which arrested the attention when he spoke, and afterwards rung



upon the ear. In general appearance he was very graceful—artistic perhaps—but the effect was unstudied. He assumed none of the *et cæteras* which his profession might have excused, wearing neither beard, moustache, nor a turn-down collar. Being in dress like other men, he yet looked unlike them. His very modes of expression were original without intention, and remarkable from being inartificial. At the time we introduce him to Augusta Leigh, and bring him again before our readers, he was fast gaining upon his thirtieth year. Somehow, although men of two-and-twenty may be very interesting, it strikes us that the characters they display in books at that age are at times more fitted to be given to men of ten years older, for boys do not in real life throw off the moral jacket and trowsers with the corporeal schoolboy clothes—at least we have not often met with such; neither do we think that they are at all most interesting at a period when they have parted with the simplicity and innocence of childhood, and not yet gained the decision and character developed of a man.



## CHAPTER VI.

MR. LEIGH did not at first seem inclined to like Philip's friend ; he persisted in supposing him stupid, and in saying that there was nothing in him ; and Lyle did not, in his action, contradict the assertion, for although he came again to Mr. Leigh's house, he sat, as before, almost silent ; whether listening to the conversation of the others, or occupied with his own thoughts, could not be known. Bearing in mind what her cousin had said relative to Mr. Lyle's want of taste, and perhaps partly actuated by a desire to overcome so strange an indifference, or by pique that such an indifference should exist at all, several times Augusta strove to engage him in conversation, and then the gravity would roll away from his face like a cloud from before the sun, his countenance would become animated, and he was in no want of words to reply to her remarks ; but Mr. Leigh would presently join in, or would cease his conversation with Philip in order to listen to what was being said, and



Henry Lyle would again become grave, answer more briefly, and then relapse into silence.

To Augusta there was a fascination in the contrast, and she persisted in the opinion that Mr. Lyle was not stupid.

Certainly she was best able to judge on the subject, Mr. Leigh having never spoken further than common-places to Lyle.

One day, on returning from their walk, Mr. Leigh and his daughter heard the voices of two men in conversation as they ascended the stairs.

"There is Master Phil in the drawing-room," said Mr. Leigh, stopping, as he recognized his nephew's voice, "but who the other one is I cannot, for the life of me, guess."

At that moment the voice of Philip's companion was raised in argument, so clear and conclusive in answer to Master Phil's proposition, that the old man exclaimed :

"That's right ! He gives it him, does he not ?"

"It is Mr. Lyle," said Augusta, in an under tone.

"Nonsense !" returned her father ; "Lyle has never found his tongue for so long as that. Don't tell me."

They ascended to the landing at the top of the stairs, and Mr. Leigh opened the drawing-room door gently. Lyle was standing with his back towards him, and not hearing his entrance, he continued talking earnestly and convincingly to Philip Wilson. When, however, shortly afterwards, he observed Wilson nod towards the door, he turned round suddenly, blushed at seeing Miss Leigh, then laughingly held out his hand.



From that moment Mr. Leigh never called Lyle stupid, and entertained a real friendship for him ; and strangely enough we would say, if anything were strange in a shy man, Henry Lyle, from that hour, was at his ease with the Leighs, was in their house constantly, spent his evenings, accompanying Philip, with Mr. Leigh and Augusta, and the old lieutenant began to look for Henry's coming quite as much as he did for his nephew's.

Curiously enough, when this state of things had come to pass, Master Phil ceased the overweening praises which he had been used to give to his friend before he had introduced him to his uncle and cousin. He still was no less attached to Lyle ; but when Mr. Leigh lauded his friend's abilities, Philip Wilson did not respond so readily as he might have done ; and when Augusta called him intellectual and agreeable, her cousin said "pooh !" and told her she would not ever have thought him so if Lyle had not happened to have a picturesque appearance ; although, which was stranger still, if at another time Augusta called Mr. Lyle picturesque, Philip would scout the idea as intolerably absurd and amusing. Hitherto her cousin had been Augusta's only companion from her youth, excepting her parents, and now that she was grown to womanhood, it was irritating to Philip Wilson that she should appear to take so strong an interest in Lyle. A very strong interest Augusta did take in him, might have been apparent to all but to Lyle himself. His shyness once overcome, there was nothing like formality in him ; he stepped at once into the position of an old and intimate friend, and spoke unreservedly of his childish days, his first youth's struggles, and ultimate success. Mr



Leigh no longer spoke slightly of the painter's profession, nor did he laugh at Henry's philosophy, however he might at Philip's, and he even went so far as himself to ask permission to view Lyle's studio, and when there, expressed his high satisfaction with all he saw. Henry Lyle was painting at the time that Mr. Leigh and his daughter arrived at his room, and Augusta thought he looked more picturesque than ever in his blouse and belt. After having shown his pictures, Lyle asked to be allowed to walk home with them, and quickly changing his clothes, the party being reinforced by the company of Philip Wilson, they set out towards Mr. Leigh's residence. Mr. Leigh called to Philip as they were descending the stairs, saying he wished to speak to him upon some subject of interest; and Wilson, looking rather blank, gave his arm to his uncle. The look was not perceived by Mr. Leigh or by Augusta; but Henry Lyle changed colour, and not until they had walked a few yards from the door, and he observed that Mr. Leigh and his nephew were conversing earnestly, did he offer his arm to Augusta.

Augusta had lived alone with her father, seeing none but men of her father's standing, with no companions of her own age excepting her cousin, no female companions but the elderly wives of elderly men. To one judging as the generality judges, her life seemed a very dull one; yet she had never felt it so. Her ignorance of society had been the cause. But as a new-found pleasure, she enjoyed the company of Henry Lyle. His ideas were fresh to her; his was a new mind. Augusta had never learnt any ideas which might have made her averse to speaking unreservedly. In the unsophistication of her mind



she alluded to many things and events which, perhaps, others, more prudent but less open-hearted, would have condemned as unwise. It was in such unreserve that she answered, in reply to a remark of his relative to America :

“I have an interest in America on account of my poor brother.”

“Your brother?” asked Lyle. “I did not know you had a brother.”

“I scarcely can say I have one, I fear,” she answered, “for he is to us as if he were not ; we have not seen him since I was ten years old.”

“He is abroad, then?” asked Lyle, gently.

“He went to America many years ago ; not choosing to follow his father’s profession, for which he was intended, and being unable to live on shore, he tried several things, but could persevere in none—a family failing, you will think. Poor fellow ! he has plenty of natural ability, but he will not remain steadily at any one thing.

“But he is prospering now, I trust?” said Henry Lyle.

“He never writes to let us know of his prosperity or otherwise. He seems, indeed, to have severed all the ties of home. I have written to him several times, and begged him to write to his father, but can receive no answer. Papa and he, unhappily, had a disagreement before he left England, and I am afraid that my brother still holds ill-feeling on that account.”

“But you hear of him, I suppose?” said Lyle.

“Yes, from others. We have met several who have known him ; but he never seems to care to inquire about us,” said



Augusta, rather sadly. Lyle did not answer, and, looking up in his face, she resumed : I do not know, Mr. Lyle, what makes me tell you all this. It must appear strange to you that I should speak of family dissensions to almost a stranger."

"I had hoped," said he, "by the confidence you evinced towards me, that you did not look upon me as almost a stranger."

"Nor do I, strictly speaking," said Augusta. Being Philip's friend makes you better known to us."

"Do you not think," said Lyle, "that some are never strangers from the first meeting? There is a sympathy between particular individuals which no years of intimacy will produce, and yet which may be born in five minutes."

"You are always urging strange things which I have never thought of before," she answered—"things which set me thinking. I have never heard any one talk as I have heard you. It seems to me as if I have hitherto lived from hour to hour without caring further than for the events of the present time, and those events only in my own circle. Philip used to philosophise, as papa calls it, but he never seemed to feel as you do."

"You and Philip appear to be great friends," said Lyle, rather shortly, and half interrogatively.

"Oh! Philip has indeed taken the place of a brother to me. You can have no idea, Mr. Lyle," said Augusta, her hazel eyes glistening, "of the kindness of that boy ever since my childhood."

"He has his reward in your affection," answered Lyle—"a reward surpassing any service a man may have been able to render you."



"So you say out of compliment," said Augusta, laughing to counteract the gravity with which her companion's speech had been made. "If you knew me better, you would not so overrate the value of my affection."

"I do not overrate it, Augusta," said he, as if, and in reality, calling her by her Christian name accidentally. Affection cannot be valued. I think that any service, however hard, that a man could render, would be fully paid for by the grateful love of a fellow-creature; for love in its strength, if not in its power, is all-perfect. I am speaking, you observe, merely philanthropically. How much greater must be the reward, then, when coming so unrestrainedly from such a one as yourself."

"Still you compliment, Mr. Lyle. I am no more than a fellow-creature, however you deck me out with pretty speeches. I only wish that love were almost all-powerful. I think the poetry of your own feelings makes you believe many things which would be hard to the generality to receive."

Lyle looked at her and smiled, as if he would have asked, "Who is complimenting now?" but if he so thought, he did not express the thought in words, but continued the former subject.

"Cannot love console where it cannot remove grief, so as almost to efface the recollection of it?" he asked. "Is not the consciousness of being loved the sweetest earthly balm whatever untoward circumstances may happen? Who could not bear the loss of fortune patiently who could be comforted by loving hearts bearing it with him? I do not speak from experience," added Henry, as the remembrance of his solitary struggles rose before his memory, "but I think such things must be."



"They are, no doubt, with some—not with all. Some do not feel the value of that sympathy you mention—are content to live in mutual indifference with regard to others."

"Then such are much to be pitied, Miss Leigh," said Lyle.

"They would not, probably, understand the reason for your pity," Augusta answered. "They are quite happy, or consider themselves so, which is the root of happiness, is it not?"

"Impossible!" said Lyle. "Theirs can be but negative enjoyment, for the absence of love and friendship must be absence of happiness."

"Yet invariably the cold-hearted live the longest, I have heard," urged Augusta.

"Do they so? So do fishes live for very long, I believe," said Henry, laughing, "but who could compare their enjoyment with that of warm-blooded animals? Life were not worth possessing without the heart's life—the capacity of loving, firstly our Creator, and from Him, downwards, every creature He has made."

"Ay, but now are you not speaking of universal love, which many men would profess without being capable of loving, self-devotedly, one object, and which is, in many cases, although, of course, not in all, but a universal indifference?"

"Do you then think," asked he, "that love must be like light, brought into a focus in order to burn? Your words seem to infer that expansion of the heart would decrease its strength. No, the greater the practice of love, the greater will be its force. All natural capacities increase by use. The human heart is not a narrow cell in which one or two may be accom-



modated, and the rest left to indifference ; but in loving the whole creation, the love of particular objects is increased. We know our love to God should overbear all human love ; yet that cannot make us shut our eyes from worldly affections. On the contrary, in proportion as our love to God increases, so also should or will increase our love to all those whom we previously held dear ; and that love which you style universal, but which need be no weaker from its extensiveness. Man was sent into the world to love. He has had the great lesson of love taught him. Every experience of life reiterates ; and he who fails in cultivating the uses of the heart, fails as signally in his obligation as the man who neglects his soul, or permits the faculties of his intellect to run to waste. Am I still too general ?” he asked. “ Do you think that a man—Philip, for example—loves you the less because he may love a great many other persons ?”

Augusta still made no reply. She was thinking over Mr. Lyle’s words, so unlike what she had ever felt herself. She had not given to herself a reason for anything she thought. She was now dwelling mentally on the fact that hitherto there had been no pervading principle guiding her life. As she said, she had lived from hour to hour influenced only by passing events, strengthened only by outward circumstances, ready to be swayed by either influence, for good or evil. The good had come the first.

Mr. Lyle rose in her estimation during these thoughts as a superior being ; as a man in God’s image, morally as well as physically. Her train of thought was broken in upon by



that which in no way jarred upon it—his gentle voice

“Is it not so?” he asked.

“It should be so, I feel,” she answered; “but I have never so thought before. Is this the philosophy of which Philip speaks? Are these the kind of lessons you teach him?”

“I teach him!” repeated Lyle. Did Philip ever say I taught him anything? Man learns these things unconsciously, it seems to me. I cannot think myself a teacher to any man who am still so much a learner myself.”

“You have taught me to-day a lesson I never knew before,” said Augusta; “to pause and apply your words to myself. My world has been my father and Philip hitherto, and a very indistinct future, in which occasionally to day-dream. Few men, I fancy, think so universally as you do.”

“I hope not; else where were the philanthropists, the benefactors of mankind? Were those who can dream only, or little more, to be the only well-wishers, the world would be in a desolate state indeed. There are practical preachers many, as well as mere advocates, Augusta. It would be a sad thing, indeed, if all the desire of good were with the impotent.”

“Yet, according to your lately-expressed opinion, Mr. Lyle, no man can be impotent who loves his fellows.”

“Very true; you convict me on my own argument. Love can never be wasted. It is like mercy twice blest. So we who learn the law of love are philanthropists in anywise, never forgetting to grasp the opportunity should it arrive. Opportunity is of God, therefore they also serve who only stand and wait. We should not have lived in vain, had we never been enabled



to help on our fellow creatures with more than kind words and encouraging smiles. But these we are pledged to give, having no more, as members of the same family. We execrate brotherly indifference, do we not? and are we not all of one Father?"

They reached the house as Lyle concluded, and he held out his hand to Augusta, having engagements in another direction. Philip Wilson looked a little glum as he turned and regarded the two; but he brightened up immediately upon Lyle's making his adieux, and accompanying his uncle and cousin into the house, was very entertaining throughout the evening.

Augusta did not feel any offence against Mr. Lyle for having twice called her by her Christian name.

If any of our readers have formed an unjust idea of the personal appearance of Augusta Leigh from previous association with the name, we would here undeceive them. Never has a name been more hardly used and more unjustly dealt with than the name "Augusta," being almost invariably given to characters disagreeable, haughty, imperious, and ill-natured. Augusta may be an amiable, loving, unaffected girl, such as our Augusta is. We would, if possible, redeem the name from the odium which almost insensibly we attach to it. We have known unpleasant Marys and single-hearted Augustas.

Gussy Leigh was below the average height, slight and active, with affectionate hazel eyes, an abundance of dark hair, and very pretty features. Animated in her manners, volatile but not frivolous; very fond of laughter, but beginning already to suspect that there was a time for all things; a suspicion which



should or does generally, come upon us as we grow into men and women. If it has not yet done so, we had better so think at once, for there is not any time for delay.

It was natural that Augusta should think over the conversation of that afternoon with Mr. Lyle. His feelings, so simply expressed and so gently spoken, recurred again and again to her mind. "I do not speak from experience." She had heard him hint at the harshness shown to his childhood, but it had been lightly touched upon, sparing the author of his first troubles. She was aware that the world had not always dealt kindly or truly with him, and knew that the sensitive shyness which characterised his manners and actions had been induced by the rebuffs and opposition which he had already met with. Yet he spoke of the law of love as a law incumbent upon all ; as if, ever forgetting those things which were behind, he reached his hand daily to all that lived and suffered before him. Yet Augusta's life had been one upon which the lights of affection had been always cast ; she knew not what harshness was ; her love had never been returned to her unused and unappreciated. All who had hitherto known her had loved her, and she had rested securely, as if all these things were rightfully hers.

Had any one suggested that Augusta Leigh was selfish, all who knew her would have contradicted such an aspersion as false in the extreme ; yet of selfishness Augusta accused herself that evening, and justly so, in action though not in disposition. She had been content to be loved and to be happy, and had never thought that others suffered, were neglected, uncared for, and alone in the world. From that evening, many new thoughts



arose in her heart, consequent upon the words of Henry Lyle. The arrow had gone home, but so gently, that even the pain conviction gave her made her grateful and happy, and insensibly she learnt to venerate almost the human hand which had been made the instrument of an angelic purpose



## CHAPTER VII.

HENRY LYLE sat alone in his painting-room. His work had not much progressed that morning, yet occasionally he played with the brush against the margin of the canvas, apparently without any definite idea or intention. His thoughts had wandered back to the old first days. Before his evils had begun, the dim shadow he remembered of his mother, whether placed in his heart by personal remembrance, or created by the picture he had seen later in childhood before his father's death, he knew not. It was the first impression of womanhood he had received, and it was a gentle one, though serious and subdued. Then the crushing of poetical associations in the person of his grand-aunt, Miss Lyle; the half-contemptuous feeling which even as a child he felt, and which now revived at the recollection of Miss Wigginson, Miss Mangles, and the rest of that female corps; the subserviency, the ever-ready appetites, the absence of opinion, the spitefulness towards each



other. Lyle would have laughed had he felt happy. His comic disposition evinced itself only in the quick and half-unconscious sketching with the paint-brush of a profile of Miss Wigginson, surmounted by a cap laden with bows.

All these were past, as in a dream. Lyle had ever shunned the society of women. He had long resisted Philip Wilson's desire to introduce him to his uncle and cousin only because of Augusta; and now he had been introduced, and had found neither a Miss Lyle nor a Miss Wigginson. Then why did Henry Lyle sit so abstractedly? Why could not he continue his painting, and make some use of his time? Of what avail was it running back in thought over the ground already traversed? His past experience of female austerity and unpleasantness had nothing whatever to do with the unaffected manners of Augusta Leigh.

"Well!" said a voice at his shoulder, "and how long are you going to keep me waiting for a remark of some sort? What has come over you, Lyle? Is that all you have done the whole morning?"

Lyle started and blushed as his reverie was interrupted. Philip Wilson had entered unheard; had stood unseen close beside him; and Lyle felt as if his friend must have read his thoughts, so vivid had they been to himself.

"Wool-gathering must be a profitable trade just at present," observed Wilson, "for wool is, I believe, fifteen shillings the pound. Of what have you been dreaming, my visionary friend? Oh, Lyle! oh for shame!" continued he, discovering the portrait of Miss Wigginson upon the canvas. "In love! and



tracing the features of the fair one. I would not have chosen such a red nose, though, my boy, had I been you."

Lyle laughed, and covered down the portrait with his brush so as to efface it; and Wilson added presently:

"My uncle was asking last night why you keep away from them. I am sure I had not observed that you absent yourself. You have gone often enough."

"I have not been often lately," said Lyle, quietly. "I hope your uncle is quite well?"

"Oh yes; all right."

Lyle was about to inquire after Augusta, but he checked himself, and could not have given himself a reason for so doing.

"I suppose you had better go with me this evening," added Philip, "the old gentleman is so easily hurt. You do not find it a bore, do you?" he added, looking wistfully at his friend.

"Certainly I will go," said Lyle, as if deliberating on his answer. "I should not like Mr. Leigh to think me discourteous or inattentive." And the rest of that day also Henry Lyle was incapable of applying himself to his occupations, and angry with himself that it was so. When, in the evening, he entered Mr. Leigh's room, Philip's attention was for the time occupied with his uncle, and Lyle was not so short-sighted but he could see that Augusta found it difficult to conceal her pleasure at the sight of him. Why should she have striven to conceal it at all? *Propriety*, we suppose, suggested such an attempt. Self-taught propriety, in this case, for Augusta had never received staid lectures such as Miss Wigginson might have delivered on the subject. Henry Lyle's heart beat irregularly



all that evening as he sat conversing on common-place topics with Augusta. He was happy entirely without analysing his feelings; having no wish to do so, lest he should be forced to dismiss them, and lose the happiness they gave him. But the evening came, and good night was said, and Wilson and he returned home. They had to grope for a light on their arrival at their room, for the fire had gone out, and Philip Wilson seemed disconcerted by some train of thought of his own, and wished his friend a short good night, and left him. Lyle sat down upon the side of the bed instead of undressing and getting into it, and again fell into a reverie; pleasant this time, judging from the expression of his features, which always showed unreservedly what was passing in his mind; and thus after a time he went to sleep, throwing himself back upon the bed, dressed as he was, and in the morning, of course, he had a headache.

That did not seem to affect his spirits, however, so that Wilson became quite cross, and accused his friend of being incapable of anything but laughter; which accusation Wilson at another time would have been the first to deny.

"Well, I will repress my tendency to merriment since it seems so much to displease you, Philip; but really I was not aware of the solemnity of your feelings on this particular morning," said Lyle, good humouredly.

"I do not, as a rule, see anything so very cheering in life to occasion such extreme mirth," returned Philip, putting sugar into his tea with grave deliberation.

"That depends upon a man's temperament, my dear fellow



I have hardly ever yet properly had my laugh out. Something is sure to check it."

"Poor fellow!" said Wilson. "Well, laugh away."

"Not now! the check has come. Listen to the clock: it is time for work." And Lyle commenced vigorously at his easel, whistling as he painted.

The check had come. That day, not long after his light-hearted laughter, Lyle suddenly pulled himself up. The morning had flown by on wings of happiness, indulging in thoughts unrestrained, which tended to—what?

What right had he, Henry Lyle, a man working daily for his bread, struggling on in life, with no prospects but from his own exertions, to think of these things? True, she had received him with evident pleasure; his words had made her blush when no blush was called for. What had he to do with such things as these? He had gone wrong already: he had erred in dreaming of such happiness, undefined as the dream might have been. He had erred—had he?—with regard to her? No; he could not accuse himself of any such thing. He had wished, had striven to shun temptation, and it had been the night before forced upon him. He could not act rudely, and his manners towards Augusta had been only civil. But the tones, the looks, the expression of the face, were they nothing? They were all; and they were indelibly impressed upon Augusta's heart. And yet, dear Lyle, we know you could not have avoided them. Being in her presence, schooling of the features and the voice were not in your power. Were they a wrong? Is there such a thing as *unintentional* wrong? We



pray for the forgiveness of sins of ignorance, and yet how *can* that be sin which is done without intention?

It was but a momentary dream. It must be forgotten ; it should be forgotten ; he could not be discourteous, and thus expose his own weakness. He had always laid stress on the fact of his poverty ; that she had known from the first. What a fool he was ! he argued as if there were any hope, or rather fear, that she cared the least about him !

But a dream ! and yet, Lyle, a dream may be for a life. A gentle heart like yours does not awake and close again its eyes to sleep.

He would be strong ; he would shake off the influence, and forget.

This resolution once arrived at, Henry Lyle was standing contemplating his picture with a very determined, but very sad, countenance, seeing nothing that was in the room, when Philip Wilson entered.

“Well, old fellow!” was his salutation.

Lyle placed a hand on each of Philip’s shoulders, and looked at him affectionately. It was a relief to him, from his own constrained and painful thoughts, to hear Wilson’s kind voice ; and he felt inclined to love everybody particularly well at this moment, as some sort of compensation to his tired and aching heart.

“What has become of your high spirits of this morning, eh, Lyle ?”

Lyle smiled, and shook his head.



"What! have they received the mysterious check you spoke of?"

"Yes, they are chained in abeyance for a time."

"Lyle, I believe you are in love," said Wilson, half in jest. He did not stay to consider his speech, but turned round the room, thus avoiding seeing Lyle's face, which might have confirmed his idea if it were in any way a true one, and continued on the same subject: "If there is anything in Christendom more unpleasant than the rest, it is a man in love. If you were to go and get spooney, I shall cut you; though who on earth it could be with, unless with the original of your caricature, I cannot imagine."

"Not much chance of that, I think," said Lyle.

"A man must be such a fool to fall in love unless he can marry," urged Wilson; "it must be entirely his own fault, and he ought simply to be ashamed of himself."

"You intend never to do such a thing yourself, then, Wilson?"

"Not I," said Philip. "I look at the thing rationally."

"I imagined that lovers were not supposed to be rational beings," said Lyle.

"The generality are not. Now, were I to make a fool of myself by any chance, and fall in love——"

"Well, what then?"

"Why, I couldn't marry, you know, at present."

"No; but that does not always prove a safeguard," said Lyle.



“And so I should just look at the thing philosophically,” rejoined Wilson ; “and I would get over it in a fortnight. Any man of determination can if he chooses. I do not myself believe in those life-attachments. Do you, Lyle ?”

“Implicitly,” replied the other.

“Of course you do ; but you are such a romantic animal. I have no patience with you,” answered Philip Wilson.



## CHAPTER VIII.

DATING from that walk with Augusta, Mr. Lyle discontinued his regular visits to Mr. Leigh's house. That gentleman was constant in his inquiries after him, but Philip returned the same answer, that Lyle's engagements were pressing, preventing him from leaving home just then. One time Henry Lyle came for a half-hour in the evening, but testified a nervousness which reminded Augusta of the shyness of their first acquaintance.

Henry Lyle, with all the ardour of his affectionate heart, so unused to kindness from the other sex, with his associations of women leaning him to the other side, had learnt to love Augusta. It had burst upon him as a fact before he was well aware what he was doing. As Philip Wilson told Augusta, Lyle did not seem to care for her charming sex, or rather he had imagined that he did not, and it was with difficulty Philip had induced him to accompany him to his uncle's house. But



when he found Augusta, what she was to all, so open-hearted, unprejudiced, and *unladylike*, Henry Lyle discovered his heart indulging in illegitimate thoughts for him, and he chose the very unwisest but most natural course.

He acted like an honest and foolish man, shutting himself up alone with his own recollections; for who, the strongest-hearted amongst us, can bid defiance to thoughts when they come in the disguise of friends, and look so very innocent? His poetical mind exaggerated his own feelings, and without Augusta's presence—having fled from her to avoid temptation—Henry Lyle, with his philosophy and self-arguments, became a lover.

Again, Philip Wilson was Augusta's constant companion, but the charm of her home was gone. A dullness which she had never known before began to make itself felt. She had learnt to look for greater pleasure than the society of her father and Philip alone, and she felt as if a blank had come upon her usual employments, because Henry Lyle's gentle voice was not there to remark upon what passed, to moralise where others would only gossip. Yet Augusta, had she been accused of such regrets, would have felt the blood up in arms upon her cheeks to refute the accusation. Still Mr. Leigh complained frequently of Lyle's absence, accusing him of rudeness, want of attention, all sorts of things which the old gentleman did not really mean, and sent to Lyle messages by Philip to such effect. Whether these messages were all faithfully delivered we know not.

One day after a tirade against Lyle had been delivered on



the part of Mr. Leigh, Augusta added to her father's accusation a message from herself to Henry Lyle, asking him to come and see Mr. Leigh, who felt his prolonged absence as a personal unkindness. That evening Henry Lyle accompanied Philip.

"And so you have come at last!" exclaimed Mr. Leigh, as Henry entered, rather shyly. The old man had intended to be cool and displeased in his manner, in order to show his disapprobation, but when he again saw his young friend, he withdrew the hand which, upon his entrance, he had put behind his back, so as to place it out of temptation, and warmly shook that of Henry. "And pray what may be this business which keeps you so occupied as to prevent you ever coming near us now?"

"I have a rather pressing order," answered Lyle blushing, which I am desirous of executing without delay."

"An order which I suppose occupies your nights as well as days, and prevents your ever dropping in for a few minutes to have a chat with an old friend."

Mr. Leigh forgot for the moment that Henry Lyle and he were not very old friends, as the usual meaning is.

"However," he continued, "I am glad you have thought better of it. Here have been Gussy and I very dull for want of you, Phil has no wits to keep one alive."

"Thank you, sir," ejaculated Philip.

"Have not we, Gussy?" inquired her father.

Augusta had walked to the window as Henry Lyle, unexpectedly to her, entered. She had felt inclined to cry when she first saw him, which was very absurd; and Henry curiously



enough, had seemed to have forgotten her presence by his not speaking to her, which was very rude on his part.

“Have not you been very dull without Lyle?” asked Mr. Leigh.

“I have wished for him very much, papa, for you have always been regretting his absence,” Augusta said; and congratulated herself afterwards upon the presence of mind she had displayed in her answer.

Cousin Philip became uninteresting and difficult to please at this juncture, so that Mr. Leigh’s foregoing accusation was more deserved that evening than it had been in reality before. He fidgeted from place to place, and after some time remembered that he had an engagement in some other part of town, and saying he would call in later in the evening, took his hat, which he knocked upon his head somewhat spitefully, and left the house.

The light passed away, and candles came; but Mr. Leigh would not hear of Henry’s going. Tea was brought, and Augusta took her place at the table. She was still very silent for her who was generally so lively and talkative, and her father laughed at her as the tea-things were removed, rallying her on her low spirits.

“Fetch your guitar, my dear, and sing to us,” said he.

Henry Lyle rose and reached the instrument for her, reiterating Mr. Leigh’s request. But Gussy did not sing so well as usual that night. Her voice was plaintive, and she selected, almost unconsciously, songs which struck mournfully upon the ear.



Henry Lyle had several times before heard Augusta sing, and always, as now, had listened with almost breathless attention to every note ; now, he looked at her for some moments as she sang, but gradually turned his face another way, until he seemed occupied with gazing at the tablecloth, and at length shaded his eyes with his hand. She was singing "Home, sweet home."

Augusta ceased, and, checking a sigh which rose to her lips, laid the guitar aside. Mr. Leigh cleared his voice before he observed,

"We are none of us very gay company to-night. What makes you choose such doleful ditties, little woman?"

"Shall I sing something more lively, father?" said Augusta.

"No, my dear ; I fancy I prefer the mournful ones. Come, Lyle—you know everything—what makes me prefer the melancholy songs to the merry ones—eh?"

"The only reason I can suggest, sir," answered Henry, "is that the mournful music accords best with the melancholy feeling which all music awakens in the heart or memory."

"Why should the feeling which accompanies music have always a tincture of mournfulness?" asked Augusta.

"A tincture of regret, or of desire for something we have not?" added Mr. Leigh.

"It seems to argue either man's former purity, or the purity to which he is hereafter to attain," said Lyle, "that so pure a pleasure as listening to music should dash his spirit with regret or longing. If you notice, Augusta, in all enjoyments of this world there is the same imperfection, as if we felt ourselves



capable of appreciating a greater extent. It sometimes occurs to me that every innate feeling of the human breast proves the immortality of man, if man would but perceive it."

"Ay, if man would but perceive it," answered Mr. Leigh. He sighed, and then laughed rather awkwardly, adding, "It is as well for me that Master Phil is not here, or he would accuse me in his turn of philosophising. I should not dare to do so in his presence; but there are times, Lyle, when a man seems forced against his will to moralise and reflect."

Augusta left her seat and placed herself upon a footstool near her father, and he drew her towards him, so as to lay her head upon his knee. They were all silent for some moments, and then the old lieutenant observed:

"I have been thinking several times lately, Lyle, that I ought to make my will. I should not like to die and leave my child without a penny, as she would be as now it stands; for although I have little enough to leave, Heaven knows, yet that little should be Gussy's, rather than go to those who never cared for me."

This was an allusion to his absent son, Lyle was aware, and he passed it over saying,

"I cannot understand any man delaying in making his will. It were surely better, under whatever circumstances, to be prepared. What that feeling is which prompts delay I confess I never could comprehend."

"Why, you see, a will is not a pleasant thing to think of," said Mr. Leigh.

"Why not, sir?" asked Henry. "It seems really as if men



imagined that the act of will-making is a species of suicide, from the averseness some entertain towards it."

Mr. Leigh laughed, for he was aware that some such feeling as the young man quoted had hitherto actuated himself, and he laughed to avert suspicion; yet he added, honestly,

"It is a very foolish objection, certainly; but one pretty general, Lyle. I am afraid I have been wrong in delaying making my will. But I will not put it off longer; we never know what may take place; I will see about it at once. I will make it to-morrow."

To-morrow! It is the loophole for us all. Hitherto I have lived for myself only, concentrating all my energies upon the present time; but I will be unselfish and liberal-minded to-morrow. I have quarrelled and acted offensively, but to-morrow I will be lenient. I have given way to all my evil passions, but I will exercise control over them to-morrow. To-morrow shall see me better, wiser, more Christian, more what God requires of me—and to-morrow shall see me saying, as I say to-day, "I will be all this to-morrow!"



## CHAPTER IX.

So Mr. Leigh put away the thoughts of making his will until the following day, and spoke of other things.

There was a vein of thoughtfulness, almost sad thoughtfulness, threading throughout the conversation of that evening. To the surprise of Augusta more than of Lyle, Mr. Leigh mentioned his son. It was a subject which for years he had never touched upon, and which, when alluded to by others, brought a cloud over his brow ; but now he spoke of that son's quarrel with himself, and subsequent neglect, as of an event passed, and with perfect mildness and simple regret that such things had been. The conversation brought back the days of old, when Valentine and Augusta had been children, and Mr. Leigh suddenly expressed his intention of going up-stairs in order to fetch some portraits taken at an early age, which, with the fondness of a parent, he had kept, but which, with



the indignation of a parent, he had locked up, because the face of the prodigal Val was side by side with Gussy's.

Henry Lyle and Augusta were left alone, for Mr. Leigh vehemently declined any assistance, with some of the slight affront which elderly people take if they do not happen to be quite so strong as they think they should be at their age.

There was a dead silence following the departure of Mr. Leigh. Augusta listened to her father's footsteps with a species of awe for which she could not account, and Lyle from time to time looked up from the table, fixing his eyes upon her face, as if he partook of her indefinable anxiety. Mr. Leigh did not return with the portraits, and Augusta saying she would follow and assist him in his search, moved towards the door.

At the same moment a dull noise, like the fall of a heavy body, was heard, and Augusta turned deadly pale, and with the handle of the door still in her hand, regarded Lyle with a countenance in which terror and entreaty were blended. He took her hand from where it was placed, and passing out before her, ran up the stairs to Mr. Leigh's bedroom. Augusta looked after him for a few moments, as if anxiety had bereft her of motion, and then suddenly exerting herself equal to the occasion, she followed on the footsteps of Lyle, and arrived at her father's door.

Mr. Leigh was lying on the ground, from whence Lyle was attempting to raise him, and was senseless.

Augusta did not make any exclamation of surprise ; she felt as if she had expected this ; but she asked of Lyle, in an under tone, "Is he dead?"



Henry placed his hand upon the insensible man's pulse, and then opened his vest, so as to feel the heart, and looked sorrowfully at Augusta.

The poor girl knelt down by the side of her dead father, and gazed intently in his face ; then burst into a passion of tears, while Lyle trembled with emotion as he saw her, but said nothing. Still Augusta continued weeping, with difficulty controlling herself so as not to shriek hysterically—and Lyle, with some effort, raised the dead body of Mr. Leigh, and placed it upon the sofa. Then he went to Augusta, and forgetting all but that she was unhappy, and that he longed to comfort her, he poured into her ear his earnest sympathy and desire to alleviate the loss which she had sustained. Augusta Leigh still wept convulsively, but she listened with attention to what Henry said. His words were of her father only, his endeavours alone to raise her thoughts from the outward show of death to the reality of a new lease of life ; and yet though the subject was never mentioned by him, in that hour Lyle told his love.

When Philip Wilson called in shortly afterwards, he was violently shocked by what had happened. He was warmly attached to Mr Leigh, and it renewed the grief of Augusta to see the impassioned outburst of regret which he exhibited at sight of the dead body of his uncle. She looked at Lyle, as if actually turning to him for fresh consolation—a look which sent the blood rushing through the veins of Henry in a very bewildering manner.

Philip's grief was too tumultuous to last : before long he was sufficiently calm to accompany Augusta down stairs, in



order to strive to devise what next was to be done. It was an awkward position for a young girl, alone with two men, who, however she might look upon Philip Wilson as a brother, were no *unscandalous* protectors to her.

Lyle proposed that Augusta should be taken thence that evening, trusting all things which were to follow to himself and Philip; but Augusta objected to this proposal, choosing rather to remain with her father's body to the last. Philip therefore suggested that a female friend of Mr. Leigh's, widow to one of his former messmates, should be desired to spend the few following days with her old friend's child.

This proposal was rather bright on the part of Philip Wilson more so than might have been expected. Both Lyle and Augusta agreed to this, and Philip, whose spirits had begun to recover from the violent depression they had suffered, kissed his cousin and set out at once in order to call upon Mrs. Seymour.

That lady was a woman of a kind heart, and attached to Mr. Leigh and his daughter. Philip Wilson, therefore, had no difficulty in procuring her compliance with his request, made in a strange manner, and at a very strange hour of the evening; but Mrs. Seymour had been accustomed, as a sailor's wife, to rough life in many respects, and, full of commiseration for the helpless state of poor Leigh's child, with her eyes full of tears she packed up some necessaries, and at once accompanied Philip back to the house over which Death had cast his irresistible gloom.

The funeral took place, and Mrs. Seymour carried Augusta



with her to her own house. Many doubting thoughts had troubled the mind of the poor girl, and not fewer that of Henry Lyle as to where was to be her next destination.

Mrs. Seymour was not rich, but she was without husband and without children of her own, and it appeared to her no great thing that she should for a short time supply the place of a parent to her friend's child. Augusta's grief for her father's loss was at first very gentle, and she turned with affection to the friend who sought to alleviate it by every effort of attention and kindness.

For some days she sat actually indifferent, to all appearances, answering all the remarks made to her, returning the caresses of Mrs. Seymour, and giving way to no useless lamentations and regrets. It was not until she was dressed in mourning, her father's body was taken from her, and herself removed to Mrs. Seymour's house, that it seemed really to break upon her in all its force that her father was gone. She had no longer the affectionate face of her cousin Philip to look into, she did not hear daily the familiar voice of Henry Lyle, rebuking by its very calmness any violent ebullition of grief; alone, she wept passionately, in pity of herself, as she would catch sight of her little figure reflected in the glass, dressed in mourning, and looking very pale indeed. At the same moment would rise the thought, What did Henry Lyle now think of her? Did he ever think of her at all? Would he pity her did he see her? Her late intercourse with him seemed shadowy and unsubstantial like a dream, the thoughts which he had brought upon her overwrought; for the great occurrence of



her father's death seemed to throw all previous things far in the background of life. And Henry Lyle all this time was brooding over the late events, hourly renewing the as often broken resolution, to be wise and to overcome himself. And yet the determination, made in the day of Augusta's happiness, seemed more than ever useless now, with the recollection of her grief, her appealing looks for comfort to himself, her present comparatively desolate position. One moment, duty itself seemed to suggest that he ought to be near her; the next, prudence insisted on his absence. "Am I then so weak?" asked he of himself. And the answer was not satisfactory. So Lyle acted with civility alone towards Augusta, gave her more pain than she would have acknowledged to herself, and brooded over every word and look of hers when absent from her.

This course of action very much displeased his friend. In fact, the change which had come over Lyle's manner and appearance of late had for some time produced uneasiness and disquiet on the part of Wilson, and was the not unfrequent subject of his questions and remarks; so, during one evening, when he found himself alone with his friend, and Henry had been vacantly gazing into the fire—for love is most dreadfully idle—unaware that Wilson was watching him attentively, the latter commenced the subject by saying:

"Well, Lyle, what are you thinking of now? What is the use of your holding a book in your hand which I could take my affidavit you have never looked into more than once. What is there so interesting, my good man, in those coals?"



"I was thinking," replied Lyle, abstractedly.

"That is always the answer I receive," said the other. "'I was thinking';" as if you had all the cares of the nation on your mind."

"I think every man has cares enough of his own to set him musing, Philip."

"And I suppose I must not too curiously inquire the particular cares which now oppress you? Take my advice, Lyle, never get into the habit of day-dreaming—you are too much addicted to it."

"I am afraid the habit is constitutional," said Henry, "and too deeply rooted to be given up."

"But such impenetrable and very unsociable silence is not constitutional, and is quite inexcusable, excepting to a man in love," said Wilson, laughingly. The expression of his face changed, however, quickly, as he saw the sudden effect his last words had upon Lyle, whose countenance could never conceal his feelings. He coloured painfully, and rose from his seat, as if to avoid meeting Philip's glance, and walking to the window, looked out at the night.

Philip felt annoyed with himself that he had spoken so thoughtlessly, and wondered if by any possibility there could be a reason for Lyle's feeling his words. When the latter returned to his seat, Wilson, with the freedom of daily companionship, resumed :

"I hope I did not say anything to offend you, Lyle?"

"Offend me! indeed no. I am not so easily offended. Your words pained me; but you did not intend it," answered Lyle.



And Philip Wilson wondered more than before. He would have liked to have asked an explanation, but felt a delicacy in doing so, knowing that there are some subjects which cannot be questioned, but where the confidence must be voluntary or not at all.

Henry Lyle continued for some moments still looking in the fire; then he raised his eyes and fixed them on his friend's face, saying :

"You have several times accused me of being in love, whether in jest or earnest I cannot tell. To you, as a *philosopher in such things*," added Lyle, slightly smiling, "such a confession of feeling will of course appear ridiculous; and yet I cannot deny it—I am in love."

Philip Wilson looked so strangely at his companion for a few moments—such a mixture of surprise, sympathy, and fun—that Lyle said: "Well, have your laugh out, if you think it a laughing matter."

"I am not going to laugh," said Wilson. "I am all astonishment to think who it can be with, unless it is the laundress; in which case I am afraid it will be a hopeless passion, for I know her to be married, and the mother of twelve children."

Lyle made no answer, and Philip said, after a pause, "You have never mixed much in ladies' society Lyle."

"And therefore was the more vulnerable, perhaps," rejoined the other.

Suddenly a new light seemed to burst upon Wilson's mind, but it did not shed a radiance over his countenance, for his brows contracted, his eyes flashed, and he bit his under lip.



Yet he turned his face away from his friend, and when he spoke to him again it was without any outward signs of emotion.

“I should think,” said he, “that you hardly have had the assurance to fall in love with my cousin Augusta?” He waited for no answer—there was no need of one on Lyle’s part—and Philip Wilson started up to leave the room. “Wait Philip!” called out Lyle. And though Wilson had no intention of complying with his request the first time it was made, somehow he had not descended many stairs when the repetition of his name made him pause, and he re-entered Lyle’s room, saying, “Well?”

“Is it so unpardonable an offence to love when love was forced upon me? Have I been guilty of such great assurance as you termed it in committing an involuntary act? A man like myself does not set himself determinedly to love, and feel a fool for having done so. Do you think, Philip, that it is such a pleasant position to find my peace of mind gone, without consent or volition of my own, and nothing—nothing left me but the memory of a foolish dream I made, only to force myself to abandon as an honest man, and the consciousness of being an object of pity instead of sympathy?”

Philip Wilson sat down again where he had been before.

“I can understand,” continued Lyle, “that you, feeling the affection of a brother for your cousin, may for a moment be indignant at what you think presumption on my part. But I have not been presumptuous, Philip. I have never let Augusta know that any such thoughts have taken place in my mind.



I have at least suffered in silence hitherto. Am I to blame that these things are so? I say not. She is sufficient excuse for the feelings which rose spontaneously. I am accountable only for the use of them. Have I wronged her, or shall I wrong her, by loving her? Love can be but an honour and a blessing to the object of it, whether appreciated or not. Neither am I ashamed in thus confessing that I love, as the world would call it, unwisely and unfortunately. The world's wisdom and the wisdom of the heart, Philip, cannot agree. There is no shame in real love. It would be an insult to the object of it."

"I was wrong," said Philip Wilson. "My dear Lyle, I beg your pardon; you are the best fellow in the world." He held out his hand, and looked sincerely into the face of Lyle with his honest eyes.

"It would never have done to have quarrelled with my friend when I should most have needed his friendship," said Lyle, again taking Philip by the shoulders as he had that morning of the caricature, which circumstance brought back to Wilson's mind, by the natural chain of thought, the events of that day; and, as usual, his love of nonsense rose above contending feelings, as he said:

"So it is not the lady with the red nose, after all."



## CHAPTER X.

IF kindness could have obliterated the remembrance of grief, Augusta would have forgotten her loss under the affectionate solicitude and sympathy of Mrs. Seymour. The memory of her father soon became a settled memory only, tinged with mournfulness indeed, as all grief must ever be in recollection, but she ceased to weep his actual loss, as the interest of present life rose before her.

Philip Wilson visited them constantly, and was, as usual, unremitting in his kindness. Augusta had hoped that another than Philip would have cared for her; but Henry Lyle came not to Mrs. Seymour's house. Augusta felt hurt at this apparent indifference, and consequently sent no messages of invitation to Philip's friend.

Lyle was playing no part of indifference; but was all this time struggling with himself to forget what had been, and to



reconcile his heart to what seemed to him the fact of Philip's and Augusta's mutual attachment.

Valentine Leigh's attorney had called upon Augusta, and had had an interview with Philip on behalf of his client, who, with wonderful coolness, was content to take possession of everything left by Mr. Leigh, without seeming to care what might be the future of his sister, although the lawyer was pleased politely to compliment Augusta upon the kind interference of Mrs. Seymour.

Augusta's pale looks, and occasionally swollen eyelids, were laid by her friend to the very natural cause—her father's death—and she tried by every gentle argument to induce the heart of the young girl, to whom she was really becoming attached, to look forward with the hopefulness of youth.

Yet Henry Lyle could not in common civility absent himself altogether from the society of one with whom he had been, at one time, so intimately thrown. So, after a great deal of self-schooling, and having determined in his own mind that he was entirely fortified against any new temptations of conflicting thoughts, he called one afternoon. His heart sank as he reached the drawing-room door, and heard the voice of Philip Wilson audible above that of Augusta; but such heart-sinkings Lyle had already inwardly condemned as folly, and he entered almost immediately afterwards, thinking he looked and felt remarkably collected and indifferent. Henry Lyle, perhaps, was too much occupied with his own feelings at the moment, to interpret any emotion which Augusta might have evinced. The visit was paid, gone through calmly enough, and came to



an end, and Henry sighed as if relieved as the hall-door closed upon him, and he was again in the open air.

Philip Wilson was precipitate in all his resolutions, as he was impulsive in his disposition, and that same evening he walked into Lyle's room, and taking a chair opposite to where his friend was sitting, without prelude commenced :

“I have something to tell you, Lyle.”

Henry pushed away the book which had been before him for the last hour, unread, and most reprehensibly turned down the leaf as he did so, then raised his eyes towards Philip with a look of careless inquiry, as if he expected, as usual, some very trivial information to be given.

“I have, to-day,” began Philip, “seen that, which, at the same time that it has made me——” He stopped, hesitated, and then proceeded. “I have been forced into a determination to-day, Lyle. I cannot live on any longer in this idle, good-for-nothing manner. I shall go abroad—to America.”

“And Augusta?” asked Henry, as if in that question was comprehended every objection which could be raised against Philip's determination.

Young Wilson changed the leg which he had crossed, and twitched his face; but the room was not very light, and Lyle was a little shortsighted, and presently he answered:

“You will take care of Augusta, Lyle, will you not? It is of no use your trying to conceal from me that you would willingly take the trust”—for Lyle flushed, and looked as if about to remonstrate—“any more than she can hide that she would choose you for a protector, eh?”



Henry Lyle rose from his seat, and walked anxiously up and down the room. He did not speak for some minutes; when he did, it was in a low and agitated voice.

“Are you sure you are speaking with foundation, Philip?” said he. “Do not, I entreat you, my friend, imbue me with false hopes on such a subject. I should not know how to bear fresh disappointment.”

“There is no doubt of it,” Philip answered. “Augusta treats me as a brother, you are aware. I spoke to her on the subject this morning.”

The young man seemed to say so much in reply to his friend’s look of appeal; but he added, quickly, “I must go—I am tired. Good night.”

“Stop!” exclaimed Henry, who was incapable as yet of entirely comprehending all that Philip had presented to him. “Do speak to me calmly. Tell me more.”

“What would you have more, man?” said Wilson, in a louder voice than decorum would have dictated. But he soon recollected himself, and holding out his hand to Lyle, who still looked bewildered, said:

“Let me go now, Lyle; I am tired, and not very well. I will speak to you to-morrow. Good night, my good fellow.”

Poor Wilson’s fatigue did not send him to sleep, however, any more than Lyle’s excitement. Both lay awake for many hours, and perhaps Philip would not have acknowledged on the following morning how often the bed-clothes were crammed into his eyes to dry tears which mingled disappointment,



wounded vanity, and perhaps not entirely imaginary love, made him shed.

Philip's explanation on the ensuing morning was honest and almost unembarrassed, and Lyle was unobservant of any constraint there might have been in his friend's manner.

But with Lyle? What had become of the late persuasion that had taken possession of his mind that Augusta loved her cousin? His head was all bewildered. He once or twice was on the point of starting the objection to Philip himself, but it seemed ridiculous now, and he let the subject rest.

"But," urged he, as the old arguments rose in his mind, "while I am selfishly congratulating myself upon what you say, I ought rather to lay reproach to my own heart for having ever become acquainted with Augusta, for, Philip, you know my position."

"Well," returned the other, "and Augusta knows it too. At any rate, you have never represented yourself in false colours."

"I am a very poor man," said Lyle, "and it would be wrong to allow her, even if she would, to——"

"I was not aware that you were in such a starving condition as that, I must say," said Wilson, half smiling. "You can live by your own exertions, and have the will and power to work. I think that is a very good heritage to begin upon. I wish I could say as much of myself."

"If I continue having the power to work," objected Lyle; "but who knows? Were I unable to work, what then?"

"And who is going to disable you?"



"We must think of these possibilities, you now, Philip."

"Exactly. I had no idea you could talk with such worldly foresight and prudence," answered Wilson.

"Prudence is a quality I have never been accused of before in my life, and I do not know now whether to take your speech as a compliment or an insult," said Lyle, gravely.

"According to what importance you attach to the information I gave you last night unasked, that a girl worth a dozen such as you has been fool enough to make herself unhappy about you?"

"What can I do?" asked Lyle.

"Would it be better, do you think, Lyle, for Augusta to marry a man she loves, putting you out of the question, who may happen to be poor, than live worse than poor, being dependent, without him?"

"She might regret it afterwards. She might fall out of love with my poverty. She might——" He hesitated, and after a pause resumed: "I was going to say that she might learn to love one with happier prospects than I."

"What a fool you are, Lyle!" ejaculated Philip.

"Thank you," answered the other; "but I do not see the point of your remark."

"Which the more proves its truth. You have been given the only thing you required to make you happy, and you grumble at it."

"I do not indeed. I am most grateful to hear what you have told me.

"Yes, you seem so, and look so."



"I will act as if I felt so," answered Lyle. "I will work myself to death sooner than she should feel the evils of poverty."

"I do not think that would assist matters, nor that Augusta would thank you for taking such a course. However——" And Philip relapsed into silence, as so many do, with that concluding word, leaving whole pages of ideas to the listener's imagination.

Henry Lyle's interview with Augusta was that of a straightforward man. He explained the mistake he had made, touching but slightly upon the distress it had caused him. He reiterated what he had in the morning said to Philip; but Augusta could not see the great misfortune of being poor, and seemed perfectly satisfied with their prospects. Mrs. Seymour was delighted because two young people seemed happy. There was but one drawback—her favourite Philip's determination to leave England; and yet both she and Augusta could not but agree in the good sense of the resolution.

It seemed sudden, and Philip appeared in a violent hurry to bring his arrangements to a conclusion; but he was known to be impetuous and hasty in all his actions, and this did not create surprise.

All who knew Philip, and Augusta especially, had always regretted his indolent mode of life, and she admired him for his sudden desire for exertion and travel. None dreamt of the true reason which lay at the bottom of all. Philip strove in employment to forget the annoyance, and learnt, at least, the real object of labour—mental health.



In the truest sense he “looked at the thing philosophically,” although philosophy could not teach him to forget.

If Philip Wilson’s mirth was more eccentric and uncertain than before—if he sighed at the conclusion of a laugh, and fell into reveries to which he had been unused—all laid his alteration of manner to the loss of his uncle, or his regret, naturally, at leaving what had been his home. All who knew him were attached to him, careless fellow though he seemed; and Mrs. Seymour claimed him personally as her property, calling him “her boy,” and taking upon herself the care of his outfit before leaving England. Lyle could not quite understand why Philip, upon whom he had always looked as a friend, and whose affection he had never doubted, should so often lately assure him that he loved him, and shake hands so warmly and so frequently.

Poor Philip! he almost doubted his own heart; he did not know what an honest and manly heart it was.



## CHAPTER XI.

THE Miss Delavilles were two in number, of the ages of thirty and thirty-two; still calling themselves girls, very enthusiastic, and becoming more so yearly; unboundedly affectionate in their manner from the first introduction.

Augusta thought these ladies very kind and amiable, for they both kissed her fondly the first time they saw her, and called her by her Christian name at once. It struck Augusta that the Miss Delavilles repeated too frequently for strict good manners that they thought her "sweetly pretty," and admired too openly in her presence her figure, her face, her singing, her playing—in fact, everything she did. But it is very pleasant to be praised and to be thought pretty; and Gussy had been so unused to flattery, that suspicion of the truth of the Miss Delavilles' opinions never occurred to her.

They invited her to their house, where she spent at first hours, then days, until the Miss Delavilles were so inexpressibly



charmed with their new friend, that they entreated Mrs. Seymour to allow Augusta to spend a week or more at their house ; and Mrs. Seymour, ever kind in furthering what she thought would conduce to others' pleasure, gave a willing assent. Besides, Mrs. Seymour, in her honest simplicity, held a species of reverence for the ladies with whom she had unaccountably become acquainted. Their ideas, manners, and way of living were so much grander than hers had ever been, or those she had ever imagined, that in so far as she could not understand them, she respected and wondered. Augusta saw and heard many strange things, such as she thought Lyle would not quite like ; and several times, upon going to her room at night, she felt wearied and restless during this visit.

But the Miss Delavilles were acquainted with Henry Lyle ; and when he was there Augusta was happy. The ladies expressed screaming surprise the first day Lyle came and they discovered that he and Augusta were well known to each other.

“ Oh, for shame ! never to tell us. Oh, you little sly thing ! And, Mr. Lyle, you are a wicked, deceitful, charming man.”

Augusta felt quite nervous at the suddenness of the attack, and had no desire to communicate to the Miss Delavilles at that time that there was a closer tie subsisting between herself and Lyle than that of mere friends.

These ladies seemed never tired of speaking, in Lyle's presence, of Lyle's own productions, which struck Augusta as bad taste, and which appeared irksome to Henry himself, making him at times impenetrably silent, until Augusta spoke to him.



It so occurred that during the first days of Augusta's visit Mrs. Seymour received a summons into the country, to attend the death-bed of a friend, and the Miss Delavilles eagerly seized the opportunity of entreating a prolongation of Augusta's stay with them, to which Mrs. Seymour gladly agreed. When Henry heard the arrangement he looked a little grave, but said nothing.

If the continual touching of one note had been wearisome to Augusta, the time was arrived when it was to change. Henry Lyle's ovations were at an end.

One morning the elder Miss Delaville looked up from the paper, exclaiming to her sister :

"Bella ! here's charming news. Mr. Vere is in town."

"Miss Bella gave a little scream of pleasure, and Augusta asked who Mr. Vere might be.

"Bless you, child !—Vere the author. Such a sweet man ! Oh ! such a dear creature ! Such eyes !" And Miss Bella fell into silent raptures over the remembrance of Mr. Vere's eyes.

"I hope he will come to us without delay," said Miss Delaville. "We must really, Bella, go this very day and call on dear Mrs. Vere—such a sweet creature, Augusta—*his* mother. Mamma"—for there was a Mrs. Delaville, although she was not of much consequence in the house—"we must ask Mr. Vere while Gussy is here. He is the handsomest man in town. my dear. You must take care."

"I," said Augusta, with some degree of indignation.

"Oh," said Miss Bella, "do you consider yourself proof? I can



assure you he is a dangerous person—a most killing creature.”

“Perfectly *charming*,” said Miss Delaville, following up all with her pet phrase, and prolonging it into a small wail of admiration.

The Miss Delavilles were in an intense state of agitation until Mr. Vere called ; but then, unhappily, they chanced to be out. A dinner-party was planned—and poor Mrs. Delaville was coaxed and persuaded into carrying it out—nominally for twelve or fourteen persons, but in reality for Mr. Arthur Vere.

Augusta was surprised when she saw Mr. Vere. The Miss Delavilles had not overrated his personal appearance. He was very handsome, beyond dispute, for his beauty was according to the strictest rules. His fine head was covered with short, curly locks of dark hair, which clustered over his forehead like an Antonious's. His eyes were large and deeply set, so that no one ever agreed as to their colour. Every feature might have been chiselled by a sculptor, and yet there was no insipidity or want of manliness with his extreme beauty, for his figure was tall and athletic, and the mind which shone in his countenance was the powerful mind of a man. Augusta found herself several times during the evening examining Mr. Vere's face while he was speaking, for when he conversed carelessly the proud upper lip unbent, and there was a sweetness in the expression of his face which powerfully attracted her.

Arthur Vere never talked nonsense ; there was nothing boyish about his manner, such as we see continually in Englishmen of all ages ; but Augusta had known but few young men, and she thought only that Mr. Vere was more than usually serious.



There was in his manner towards the Miss Delavilles a kind of mock deference, as if he were perfectly aware of the ridiculous things they constantly said, but had forbearance sufficient to smile only when they were not observant of his features; and Augusta was surprised, almost amazed, at finding on more than one occasion Mr. Vere's glance directed towards herself, as if for confirmation of his own amused expression of face, after some rally on Miss Delaville's part.

He directed a great part of his conversation to Augusta that evening, a compliment the extent of which she did not appreciate until Miss Delaville informed her that she had been indeed honoured.

"Why, my dear, he is the cleverest man in town; I should think it is not many girls he would take the trouble to talk to so much. You may esteem yourself very highly favoured."

"I suppose I ought, then," Augusta answered; "it did not so occur to me before."

Miss Delaville did not, however, seem quite to like the fact, although she dwelt upon it several times. Augusta did not say so for fear of giving offence, but she thought that she had not derived particular pleasure from Mr. Vere's much valued remarks. There was a satirical or rather sarcastic tone pervading all he said, which struck unpleasantly upon the notice of Augusta, as if on all subjects more might be said, but was passed over, perhaps in deference to her own unsophisticated and kind-hearted judgment.

If there is in society a character most unpleasant, it is that which imbues all his observations with a tone—or it may be



but a look—of “There is nothing in it ;” might we be allowed so far-fetched a simile, as if his mental or moral nose were continually turning up at the evil savour of humanity. Such was not, strictly speaking, Mr. Vere’s apparent feeling. There was nothing of regret in his sarcasm. He was perfectly happy in despising others. Perfectly satisfied in his own superiority over the rest of mankind ; yet in all his remarks there was mixed so much of truth, that it was difficult to know where to stop approval and commence condemnation. Thus, at the conclusion of a speech which must have struck every hearer as, at the least, coolly assumptive when Augusta looked at him in some surprise, and remarked : “I cannot by any means call you a modest man ; you seem to have a very just appreciation of your own powers,” Vere answered, with a smile, not in the least offended at her plain speaking.

“What do you mean by the word modesty, Miss Leigh ? It would be absurd, indeed if a man were to pretend he thought himself a fool, when his own judgment tells him he is not so, and the world confirms him in his own opinion.”

“But men do not generally, I should think, let others see they have a good opinion of themselves,” said Augusta.

“Did I say I had so of myself ?” he asked.

“No, you did not actually say, ‘I consider myself very superior to the rest of the world,’ but you appear to think so.”

“I cannot help an inference which you may draw from my words, Miss Leigh,” Vere answered. “Modesty must be in proportion to a man’s capacity. I do not call one modest if he possesses nothing whatever to be proud of. His humility is



forced upon him, and is the natural effect of circumstances."

"Very true; and yet," said Augusta, "I thought the most gifted men were generally the most modest. Are they not?"

"I do not think so, according to what you seem to esteem as modesty. A man of ability must be aware of his own power, and others may construe that consciousness of power into self-conceit."

"A fool thinks himself wise, you remember," said Augusta, laughing, "but a wise man knows himself to be a fool."

"So the proverb says. A wise man may know himself to be a fool compared with what he might be or will be, but at the same time he knows himself to be wiser than the fools around him; and if he pretends that he does not, he must take everybody else to be greater fools than they are to believe him."

"Stop, stop! I must have time to understand that. Remember, wise man, that I am one of the fools around you."

Mr. Vere smiled at the answer; there seemed to him a fascination in the entirely new way in which he was treated—he who had been accustomed to deference and flattery.

"You are partly right," said Augusta, after a pause; "perhaps the proverb is more applicable in a higher sense. A man, however wise, must feel his powers sink into insignificance and folly when compared with Divine wisdom, for the foolishness of God, strange as the expression sounds, is wiser than man."

Mr. Vere gave no answering smile to her remark, and rising from the seat which he had, during the forgoing conversation, occupied by her side, he moved to another part of the room,



relinquishing the position to Miss Bella Delaville, whom he saw coming towards them.

He did not return to Augusta's side again that evening, but when he took his leave he held out his hand to her, while others, who had also known her but for a few hours, attempted no such proof of friendly feeling.



## CHAPTER XII.

"For what then do we live?" asked Henry Lyle. The question arose naturally from the preceding conversation, yet the Miss Delavilles looked as if he had said some strange thing, and when one of them spoke, it was to express in words the thought of both.

"You really do say the most extraordinary things, Mr. Lyle; who but you would ever ask such a question as that?"

"It does not seem to me extraordinary," he replied. "It is a question which must occur to every one of us at times, I think. 'To what end am I living?' is surely wiser to be asked now than hereafter, when the question will be changed to—'To what end have I lived?' and the answer may be a fatal one."

Miss Delaville did not reply; but Augusta smiled at Henry, and he continued:



“We must all live either for ourselves, or for God and others; the first course is madness, for it is expressly forbidden. Christ as plainly says to us now as He once said to others, ‘Labour not for the meat that perisheth.’ There is but one safe path, and is it not important that we should discover which we have taken; that we all should continually ask the question, ‘To what end am I living?’ ”

This last sentence was a question, yet Miss Delaville did not attempt to answer it, but turned it off with her usual remark, “What a strange man you are; you say such grave things at times, and yet no one is more easily amused than you are. To see you standing there one would think you did not know how to smile.”

Henry belied the imputation immediately; but answered as he did so, “You recollect there is a time for all things, my dear lady. It would never do to laugh away existence.”

The Miss Delavilles, we have said, appeared greatly to admire Henry Lyle, and yet it seemed as if the admiration were expressed more as an obligation than a pleasure. A non-appreciation of the genius of any talented man would have argued the ladies themselves deficient, and the Miss Delavilles prided themselves upon being capable of admiring all that was admirable. They therefore shrieked at everything that Lyle said although they did the same the following hour at a sentiment uttered by Mr. Vere, although the principle might be of exactly opposite tendency.

Had Miss Delaville been asked what were her principles, both for here and hereafter, we think it would have taken her



some time to decide so as to answer candidly. Perhaps the reply might have been something as the following :

“Why Mr. Vere said to-day such and such a thing, and Mr. Lyle said yesterday exactly the reverse—they are both clever men.”

Or, “I suppose that I believe and profess what other people believe and profess ; but I am not certain ; and people differ so much in opinions ; and I find it wisest to disagree with none.”

And of the younger sister had such “very absurd” questions been asked, perhaps she might in thought, though not in words, have said :

“Ask my sister ; I believe what she believes ; my principles are in nowise independent.” Or she might more honestly have parried the question with another :

“What is a principle ? I have never taken the trouble to find out. It seems to me something very unnecessary and unintelligible.”

When Henry Lyle was gone, Miss Delaville assailed Augusta afresh with the oft-repeated remark, “What very strange things Mr. Lyle says.”

“He does not to me seem to say strange things,” answered Augusta. He speaks more freely and feelingly perhaps than most men. I should be sorry to think that such feelings were strange.”

“Ah, for that matter, you are quite as odd as he is, Miss Gussy,” returned the lady ; “you will be capitally matched. But I confess I cannot follow Mr. Lyle. He seems at times quite in another world, with his philanthropy and high prin-



ciple, as I suppose it is called. He is much too good for me ; I cannot understand him. He ought to live in an Utopia to be appreciated, or go to heaven at once, instead of stopping here amongst ordinary mortals, trying to take them with him."

Augusta felt offended at the flippancy of the speech, and forbore answering for fear she might speak too strongly ; and Miss Delaville before long resumed :

" Don't you be telling him what I have said, you know, for I like to hear him talk, however dull I may be of comprehension, because he never preaches, and he seems to think everybody as good or better than himself. I sometimes feel ashamed of his giving me credit for so much more than I am. Besides, I love a clever man, even though he should come out occasionally with such odd things. Now Mr. Vere is quite Lyle's opposite, and dreadfully wicked. I am afraid I get on better with him than I do with your friend Henry, Augusta."

" I should not like a man if I thought him dreadfully wicked," said Augusta, simply. " I hope I should have no feelings in common with him ; but I fancy you are jesting in what you say."

" Ah, but there is the difference, you see," said Miss Delaville, " between you and me. I can accommodate myself admirably to Mr. Vere, notwithstanding his wickedness. Now I can rattle on in answer to him ; but when Henry Lyle talks I can only listen and applaud. I believe he is quite right in all he says, but he is too virtuous ; he never says anything agreeably wrong."

Augusta was silent, and Miss Delaville laughingly said:



"Ah! I have shocked you now. You see I do not stand in awe of you as I do of your husband that is to be. I would not dare shock him for my life."

"Why, what would you expect him to do to you?" asked Augusta, unable to keep her gravity.

"Do? Nothing, but look like a pitying angel, or something of that sort. I am obliged to behave myself in his presence, whether I will or no."

Miss Delaville spoke fact. She felt herself obliged to behave correctly in Henry Lyle's presence, young man as he was; *not* because she respected him for his talents.

Augusta looked up as Miss Delaville concluded, and answered:

"There should be, I think, no necessity of the outward presence of any *man* to induce us to try and behave rightly. We have a higher and stronger motive."

"Eh?" said Miss Delaville.

"The persuasion of being always in the presence of God," said Augusta.

"Oh! Henry Lyle all over, is she not?" laughed Miss Delaville; a laugh in which the younger sister joined. "What an apt pupil you have been, to be sure. I suppose you are indebted to him for all these sentiments."

"I am indebted to him for a great deal," answered Augusta. "But, Miss Delaville, am I not right, whether Henry taught me so or no? Is it not so?"

"Oh! yes; of course, my dear girl, we all know it is," answered Miss Delaville. "Certainly, I suppose it should be so."



And Miss Delaville having verbally agreed and supposed what might possibly be her duty, resumed her book, and forgot everything about it.

Almost from their first meeting, Mr. Vere had called Augusta by her Christian name, and she did not know how to avoid his doing so.

When Henry Lyle had so acted, Augusta had felt no displeasure; she had looked upon the friendly feeling thus shown as a compliment to herself; but Mr. Vere's action seemed very different. There was an air of patronage in his manner which was galling to Augusta's womanly pride. On several occasions of his doing so, she showed surprise by her looks, but he only laughed, and said:

"Why do not you call me Arthur? I would rather a great deal you should."

"I am sure you are greatly honoured, Miss Gussy," exclaimed the elder Miss Delaville. "It is not every one whom Mr. Vere would ask to be called Arthur by." And turning to her sister, the lady added, with an engaging smile, "What a beautiful name Arthur is, do you not think so?"

"Oh, a sweet name!" responded Miss Bella, to whom everything in life was *sweet*, if it was not *charming*, her vocabulary of admiration being somewhat limited.

"I am afraid I am not sufficiently sensible of the honour, then," Augusta answered. "I have no intention of calling him so, and I wish that he would not call me Augusta without my leave."

"Is not she a little prude?" laughed Miss Delaville; and,



whispering into Augusta's ear, said, "I fancy Henry Lyle is at the bottom of all this. You are afraid of a scolding from him."

"I am not afraid of anything; I am angry at Mr Vere's impertinence."

Vere had not heard Miss Delaville's aside, and he answered Augusta, laughingly :

"I shall call you whatever I choose; and do not provoke me by looking cross, or I shall have to come to 'Gussy.'"

Both the Miss Delavilles laughed approvingly, and Augusta had not any redress.



## CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. VERE was a prematurely broken-down woman, with the remains of great personal beauty. She had been a widow for many years, living for her son ; literally for him ; for Mrs. Vere had no higher motive in existence, no nobler principle of action, than what Arthur would wish, or Arthur would think. And Arthur returned this self-absorbing love with worse than indifference, with neglect—at times, with rudeness. Happily, Mrs. Vere could not to the full appreciate this want of affection on her son's part ; she was content to love him, and live for him ; content to see him look beautiful, and to hear him admired. There was something touching in the anxious look of interest she assumed when her son was present, or was the topic of conversation—something loveable even in the magnitude of her idolatry, leaning upon so baseless a foundation.

Arthur Vere delighted the Miss Delavilles by making his visits at their house very frequent, and for some weeks they did



not guess that it was their friend and not them he visited. Augusta refrained from day to day telling the Miss Delavilles of her position with regard to Henry Lyle, and those ladies were pleased in the opportunity given them of laughing at the very decided attentions paid by Henry to their young friend—and amused at the indifference with which Augusta received their remarks. Arthur Vere had lived hitherto unconscious of having a heart; he had been sated with pleasure from his early youth; he had seen women of every climate and every age, but never one so inartificial, so unsophisticated in feeling as Augusta. From her ignorance of evil, she was without bashfulness, and spoke the feelings which rose spontaneous in her heart. Vere was captivated with her simplicity, at which at first he had been amused, then had wondered, then admired. She seemed a strange contrast to himself—a painful one she might have been had Vere been in the habit of examining his own heart. His very love for her took him by surprise, and left him astonished at himself.

Philip Wilson left England at this juncture, as he had determined.

There was from the first a reserve and formality subsisting between Lyle and Arthur Vere. The former could not probably have explained the reason, had he been asked to account for it, and was not in himself aware of having personally induced it.

This formality could not but be apparent to all; and one morning, finding herself alone with Lyle, Augusta remarked upon it, coupling her observation with some praise of Mr. Vere.



Henry looked grave, but answered good-humouredly

“Do you, then, find Mr. Vere as fascinating as the rest of the world seems to find him? Are you very much possessed in his favour?”

“I think him very agreeable and very clever, and——”

“What else, Gussy?” asked Henry.

“I am afraid I cannot say very good,” added she, gravely, “Mr. Vere says such extremely strange things.”

Henry Lyle looked at her earnestly, but made no answer. He was generally silent when the unfavorable side of character in another was discussed. Next time he spoke it was of another subject.

At their first meeting, Mr. Vere had expressed great outward satisfaction in renewing his acquaintance with Lyle. It appeared that they had known each other at some former period, and he launched out on more than one occasion in praise of Lyle’s talent, so as to induce the Miss Delavilles to exclaim with rapture,

“Oh! Mr. Vere, it is few men can be so generous to another’s talents as you are; but you are so secure of your own position, that you can afford to praise. It is delightful to listen to you, I am sure!”

Vere smiled slightly, as if despising the lady’s flattery, and turned to Augusta.

It was not many days afterwards, when Augusta was expecting the return of Mrs. Seymour, and her visit to the Miss Delavilles was nearly at an end, that, having stayed at home from fatigue when the ladies drove out for their usual after-



noon's amusement, there was a knock at the door, and presently the servant announced Mr. Vere into the room where Augusta was sitting by herself.

Vere seemed pleased at finding her alone, and merely making a remark upon the absence of the other ladies, unaccompanied by any regrets, he sat down beside her. He was silent for some seconds after doing so, and Augusta wondered when he intended to speak, and was striving to think of something to say herself, when Vere asked,

“How did you become acquainted with Henry Lyle?”

The question seemed almost rude in its abruptness; and Augusta answered, with some quickness,

“He was a friend of my father's.”

“I was at school with him years ago,” resumed Vere. “He and I used to be deadly foes in those days. He appears to have grown into a very fine fellow,” continued he, glancing at Augusta, “but still retains some of his mad ideas.”

“I do not consider any of his ideas mad,” said Gussy, indignantly.

Vere smiled, and answered,

“That's right, stand up for friendship; but you will learn better in a few years.”

Augusta felt angry at his words—he seemed to assume a patronising air, as if speaking to a child:

“There is no necessity for my standing up for Henry Lyle; he is a very clever man.”

“I did not say he is not—did I?” said Vere, gently.



"And, more than that," returned Augusta, "a highly principled man."

"What is that?" asked Vere.

Augusta looked at him in some surprise. "Do not speak so flippantly upon a serious subject," said she.

"Do you call the subject in question serious? I might ask what meaning you attach to the word. However, I am not a serious man—I have lived too long in the world for that," said Vere.

"It may be because you have not lived long enough in the world to see the comparative worthlessness of it to the world to come. Some day you will think differently," Augusta answered.

"Do you know that all you have just said you have learnt by rote, Miss Leigh? That is not your own opinion. Some one else said it, or wrote it, and you repeat a mere prejudice."

"I am certain it is true, however; and, therefore, have taken it as my opinion. Those principles which we feel are stronger than those we arrive at by argument. Such feelings as the persuasion I just expressed rise almost to inspiration."

He looked steadfastly in her face, as he had several times before when she had spoken to him so plainly; and, after a moment, replied,

"You are a good little girl, and it may be you are the happier for your credulity." He checked a sigh as it rose to his lips, and resumed; "We outgrow all these things, you see."

"We ought not to do so, Mr. Vere," she replied. "You sur-



prise me by the odd manner in which you speak. I think you are very wrong."

"You have told me so several times since our acquaintance," answered Vere; "and you are the first who has ever done so."

"You are not angry at my saying what I think?" she asked; for he had been walking up and down the room. Vere sat down again upon the sofa by her.

"I wish," said he, "that you would always do so, dear Miss Leigh. I would, I was about to say, attend more to what you say to me than any living creature. Augusta, if I had had some one to check me earlier I might have been a better man. I might have lived for worthier purposes than I do now. If there had been but one who sometimes spoke the truth, instead of this eternal flattery, I should not have been the self-conceited idiot I am now. Augusta, had I a *wife* such as you she might make me anything. I would give up all. My heart could make an idol of a woman, as I have made ambition hitherto my god."

All this was said in a low voice and with a hurried manner. It seemed as if it were another man than Arthur Vere who was speaking.

"Oh! do not speak so—it is very wrong," said Augusta.

"Wrong, when the object is worthy?" asked he.

"Very wrong. No object is sufficiently worthy to reign paramount in the human breast but One. He who made the heart must be the master of its affections, or those affections will ruin the heart which holds them," said Augusta.



"Is it so?" asked Vere, still in the same tone, and keeping his eyes upon the ground

"Has it not always been so? The heart must be possessed with a nobler ambition than mere self-advancement or human applause for its own happiness. You must acknowledge this truth."

"Truth!" said Vere, catching at the last word. "It is what man's life is spent in searching for, and what he never finds. What is truth?"

"Do not say 'never finds.' Had Pilate, when he put the same question as you have just asked, waited for an answer, he would have been satisfied. He was standing at the fountain-head of truth—was he not?" added Augusta, presently, for her companion was silent. Vere rose from the sofa, and walked towards the window.

Augusta felt distressed for him, and was unable to speak again. His words created in her mind a strange interest for him. She had liked Mr. Vere from the first, but she had very soon lost her respect for him; she felt afraid that his words and actions were not influenced by any high principle.

Vere turned suddenly round from the window where he had been standing. "Miss Leigh," said he, "will you marry me?"

She looked at him with such blank amazement that he repeated the question, less calmly than before.

"I wish, Mr. Vere," said Augusta, as soon as she had regained her voice, "that you had never thought of asking me. I did not expect this."

Again he repeated the question, as if not listening to her



objections. His eyes flashed and his lip trembled so that she felt frightened to be alone with him.

"I am engaged to Henry Lyle," said she, wishing at once to put an end to any hope upon Vere's part.

"Henry Lyle!" said Vere, between his teeth. Augusta started at the strange expression he gave the words, and looked into his face. He was very pale, almost haggard, in a few minutes.

"Listen to me," said Vere, in a subdued voice. "By myself, by my honour, I swear—and I can swear by no greater—you shall one day regret you have refused me. You may think to be happy with that sanctimonious Lyle, but I will mar your happiness. I will be the curse of his existence as surely as now I curse himself."

"Stop, Mr. Vere. Do not dare to curse a fellow-creature, lest the curse turn upon your own head!" said Augusta, solemnly.

Vere laughed, but quite unnaturally.

"Do you hesitate?" he asked. "Will you choose your own fate? I swear to you that if you marry that man, yours shall be a life of misery—you shall regret you ever met him."

"Never! Mr. Vere. Whatever lot may be mine in after years, I shall have the blessing of a good man's love; and you seem, indeed, to consider yourself omnipotent in prescribing misery as my future portion; but there is One who can and will overrule any attempts of yours to mar our happiness. You overrate your powers. Your threats are idle."

"Not so idle as you think: they will not be, indeed. It is



the will makes the power. I will guard against any frustration of my wishes such as you seem to anticipate."

"Oh, Mr. Vere, you are a fearful man!" said Augusta, earnestly.

"Do you find me so? I can be so," said he.

"I did not mean one to be feared; you are a fearfully wicked man."

"I am a determined man," said Vere.

"I will be obliged to you, sir," said Augusta, her own firmness returning with his display of it, "to end this subject, and to leave me."

He gave her no answer, but bowing to her, left the room.

Was this Augusta Leigh whom we have seen so childish and dependent upon others, so uncertain of her own principles, now acting as a woman, boldly professing opinions as her own? To what influence was she indebted for this sudden growth into womanhood? To that of Lyle. With no evident influence, no apparent control, Augusta, in his constant society, began to feel her own individual responsibility for principles, opinions, and sentiments; began to gain those principles as her own, which before she had looked upon as independent of herself, as abstract sympathies in which she had no part. Can each of us remember the time when facts applied themselves to us—when we have been forced to *believe for ourselves*, not on the testimony of others, that *all these things are so*; that this God of whom men speak is our God; this future to be employed, this eternity to be reached, that the world may not pass on our right hand and on our left, and we be blameless in



the excuse of not having noticed it, and having forgotten that every face we meet has upon it the human stamp of brotherhood; and that the question of the first rebel against love, "Am I my brother's keeper?" was never answered in the negative?

Augusta sat for some time after Mr. Vere had left her, utterly astounded at his conduct, and unable to collect her thoughts. His words, his sudden action, seemed all like a dream, or as if he had tried to play upon her simplicity, and had acted a drama for his own amusement.

It was but yesterday, as it were, that she had known him; certainly she had, until this moment, looked upon him as a stranger; and here he had been, in her presence, giving expression to feelings beyond her conception, and to emotion painful to witness in a man. The pained look of his face recurred to her mind continually, as if it would reproach her. She felt an almost irresistible inclination to tell it all to Henry Lyle, and ask of him some solution; but the next moment she felt that such an act might be an injustice to Mr. Vere.

Then the thought occurred to her, why should she be the person selected of all others to be placed in so very uncomfortable a position? What could have induced a man, who knew so very little of her, as necessarily Mr. Vere must do, to act in the rash manner he had acted? She did not know that she carried her character written in her face, and that from the first hour of his introduction to her, Mr. Vere's penetration had read her like a book. It was not to him as if he had known Augusta Leigh but a few weeks; he never took into consideration the shortness of their acquaintance. Vere's



will was made, and he carried it out, as far as it rested in his own hands; and the man who was coveted and admired by every one he met, who was raved about by many of his female acquaintances, who was looked upon hopelessly by most as a man who never would think of marrying, because he knew too well that he had but to ask in order to have, offered himself recklessly to a young, simple-hearted girl, who was not in the least aware of the valuable possession, as the world judged, which she was declining.

What would the Miss Delavilles have thought and said had they known what took place in their drawing-room that afternoon?

What would many ladies of Mr. Vere's acquaintance have said of him, and of Augusta Leigh, could they have learnt it?



## CHAPTER XIV.

VERE scarcely knew which most to feel in Augusta Leigh's rejection of him—anger, sorrow, or surprise. The thought that she could refuse him had never occurred to his mind. Any other woman of his acquaintance would have never dreamt of doing so. So he thought. He had never before given one of them the opportunity. He had but to approach in order to call up smiles. All his life long he had been flattered and sought after. From a child he had been his mother's idol; she had yielded in all things to him. On account of his great personal beauty, she had indulged him as if he were the only child in the world to be considered.

He was not liked by his playmates, as a child, for his arrogance and overbearing spirit, for children are better judges of character than grown people; and it was not long before Arthur Vere was known by every associate of his childhood, which was consumed in alternately domineering over his play-



fellows, and going through pugilistic encounters in order to hold his position as a superior. Had he been a less sensible man, he would have grown up a fop ; but such was not the case.

As he matured and his powerful mind developed itself, and he seemed formed to carry all before him, his mother's love grew to folly. Not only now was his person thought perfection, but none could rank with him in intellect. Any who dared to differ from him must be wrong. It is true most people agreed with her in admiring her son ; for personal beauty, especially when married to gentle and engaging manners, almost invariably makes its way ; and the mass did not see the absence in Vere of the truest beauty—an amiable or *good* expression. His features were perfect, and he smiled and talked well and that was enough. Vere published, was talked of and applauded, and his mother read no criticisms but what were in his favour. But yet, with all her fondness, did Mrs. Vere really love her son ? It was strange that no thought beyond the present day of prosperity ever agitated her bosom. Was he always to be the sought-after man of talent—the admired and courted Adonis ? Might there not come a day when those talents might be asked after, that beauty demanded on account ? Of such things his mother never thought. When Arthur was a child she looked only on the surface, and now that he was a man it never seemed to occur to her that the son for whom she lived had an accountable soul. With the face of an angel, what was the heart of Vere ? Within the most beautiful cast of God's own image, the soul denied that God whose image it bore. Vere was an Atheist. Can such a thing



be? Men have professed to be such before now; and whatever Vere's secret thoughts might be if ever he arraigned them at the tribunal of his own heart, in words and in deeds he said, "There is no God." His mother did not know the extent of her son's apostasy; she knew he was careless of religion and careless of his duties, but she argued as many others have, "All young men are the same," if she cared to argue to herself about it. He was handsome and clever, and she sought for nothing else. But how came it that from others she had never heard her son was an infidel? Vere's works had never yet been strictly so. There was an absence of religious feeling which might have been painfully remarkable, but to Mrs. Vere such things were not obvious; religion not being a principle of her own mind, she did not miss it. Most of Vere's men acquaintances knew pretty well what he was, but men do not generally speak of such things to women.

Vere was aware that most *women* would be shocked at such a profession as he made; and he, who was especially their favourite, did not care to lose their admiration by letting his principles appear, the which he considered them, for the most part, incapable of understanding. Yet, with all Mrs. Vere's idolatry of her son, what had she in return? It might be thought that such indulgence as hers merited some recompense; but, no: Arthur had ruled and domineered over his mother as a child, and as a man he despised her for her folly towards himself. Her continual allusions to his personal beauty, her weak and childish admiration of all he said and did, disgusted him constantly. He was proud of himself, his



acquirements, his talents, and his appearance ; but the vainest man will become nauseated with incessant praise, and Vere showed his displeasure in a most unbecoming and ungrateful manner. Had Mrs. Vere's feelings been of a sensitive order, she would have been continually annoyed with the cutting allusions made by her son. He thought his mother a fool, and made no disguise of the feeling ; but whatever Arthur said, or however Arthur looked, in Mrs. Vere's eyes must be right ; his remarks were clever, and every expression of his features became him.

Had Vere been educated differently he would have been a better man, and this he had, at least once, already felt. He had said rightly : he could have made a woman his idol ; he could have loved truly and devotedly ; he could have gone on to anything good and great, for his mind was grandly formed, his intellect was cultivated, and his heart expansive ; but that mind was exercised on base materials, that intellect employed erroneously, and that heart swayed by impulsive passion instead of principle.

With all Vere's fame, his flattering attentions, his graceful manners, and glorious beauty, he was an unhappy man at times. Sickened with the palling repetitions of admiration, with no world beyond that which is without, at eight-and-twenty there seemed for him to be nothing new under the sun. So it sometimes would occur to him when he was alone, and when, the world shut out, our private, inner existence, will intrude upon us. A wretched man is he who is alone with his own heart, yet feels that there is no God dwelling there.



Vere had loved Augusta almost from the first hour he saw her, and he confidently expected she would love him in return. He had more than once been annoyed with her evident interest in Henry Lyle's conversation, and more than once a quickly-excited jealousy had crossed his heart; but yet, when on this morning he had proposed to Augusta, he did not expect otherwise than she would consent to be his wife. He had, whenever he of late had thought upon the future, associated that future with her, and for a short time it scarcely seemed as if it could be true that such an event had happened. And yet he sat for hours that afternoon in his own room, writing several chapters of the work he had in hand.



## CHAPTER XV.

POOR Vere! Augusta thought of him with much more of pity than of anger, and forgot, or forgave, his threats in remembering his blanched cheek and haggard expression. She could not help looking upon him as more sinned against than sinning, and reproaching herself with an unintentional fault against him.

Poor Vere! That same evening there was a man's dinner-party at Sir William L——'s. There were present, young B——, who was considered very clever, one or two artists, a few fashionable celebrities—whether for their brains or their names—and the host himself ranked as one of these.

"How late Vere is," observed Sir William, looking at his watch, and looking impatient also.

And, as is the custom, nobody loved Vere, under the circumstances.

The unpleasant feeling was, however, soon dispelled by the arrival of the man himself.



"Am I late?" asked he.

"Oh no!" answered the host, lying with the utmost politeness; "just in time. What have you been doing with yourself?"

"I only came up from Richmond half an hour ago," answered Vere, lightly, and he talked with animation until dinner was announced.

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"Power of the human mind!" echoed Mr. Langley, in reference to a preceding sentence on the part of Vere. "But how far does that power extend; what are its capacities; how, in fact, can that be considered power which may at any moment be overruled or thwarted by a higher influence?"

"Thwarted by contending influence it may be," answered Vere, "for the universe is composed of human wills, most of them of equal force; but where a superior intellect is at work, it will take captive the wills of others. Society is usually governed by one or two men. Individuals are not thinking beings, however they may think themselves so. They reflect as the line is laid out for them."

"Then how fearful must be the responsibility of such master minds," observed Mr. Langley, who was apparently ignorant of Mr. Vere's principles, "If in their train they lead others into truth or falsehood."

Vere smiled towards the speaker.

"I do not admit your reasoning," continued the gentleman. "If each man is individually responsible, as we believe him to be, his guidance would not be allowed so entirely as you imagine to other limited, however superior, intellects."



"Intellect is not limited," said Vere; "it is progressive, and the progress must be gradual; now it is not developed, but every day sees an advance."

"Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further," said the former speaker, as if musing.

The handsome lip of Vere curled disdainfully as he overheard the remark; and to look at that face, so lighted up with the consciousness of power, one might have thought, with him, where is the limit to human intellect?

There was once a man, high in power, intellectually, socially, and politically, and his heart was so lifted up as he saw the great things which his mental and bodily force had created, that he said in his heart, "Have not *I* done all these things, by my power and the greatness of my wisdom?" And that same man became lower than the beasts of the field, and the intellect in which he had gloried was shattered and destroyed, until he acknowledged that man is but man.

There was a man who sat high above his fellows in every earthly advantage, who had *Truth* offered to him and rejected it; who carried away the hearts of others as he spoke, so that the people, in their lavish adulation, rent the air, and exclaimed:

"It is the voice of a god, and not of a man."

And his heart acknowledged the impious flattery; he "gave not God the glory;" and that same man became a spectacle to mock at for after ages, a monument of the weakness of our human nature.

"Young man, you speak unthinkingly," said Mr. Langley.



"Excuse me, sir," returned Vere, "I never speak unthinkingly."

"I believe you do not," said Sir William L——. "Our friend Vere," he continued, turning to Mr. Langley, "is well aware of the weight of the words he used. Only pray do not enter upon discussions of such a nature. They are very heating."

"I never obtrude my principles unless called upon," answered Vere.

"Is the gentleman's name *Vere*?" asked Mr. Langley, stiffly.

"Certainly," said the owner of the name, smiling.

The other was silent, and shortly afterwards made an excuse for taking his leave, who, had he remained a little longer within ear-shot, would have had the gratification of hearing himself styled "one of the fools of the human species," by his late antagonist, the remark being followed by a roar of laughter, in which everybody joined but Vere himself.

Although considerably younger than most of those with whom he associated, Vere generally took the lead in conversation wherever he went; perhaps it was his overbearing arguments, or his determined assumption of superiority, or, more probably, the real superiority of his mind. He always led, and others followed: some at a distance, admiringly; others, as young B——, close at his heels, hating him for his better position.

There had always been a rivalry on the part of B——; Vere acknowledged rivalry with no one. With the utmost coolness



he would silence men old enough to be fathers to him; not rudely, or with apparent ill-breeding—that he was never guilty of—but most *politely* would he hurt the feelings of others, and with the greatest courtesy make his companions feel or look like fools. We have stated an impossibility, we are aware. There is no politeness or courtesy in such a disposition, and yet Vere was considered a perfect gentleman.

B—— was thrown into the shade by Vere—and he was painfully aware of it. He could not shake hands, or pass a common observation with his *friend*, but he knew that Vere was his superior. Everybody acknowledged, though, that young B—— was a very clever man, and his literary works were much admired. The worst part of it was that Vere always *praised them*, as if he could afford to do it.



## CHAPTER XVI

ONE evening at a party—a very dull one—at the house of a mutual acquaintance, where in the same room were congregated amongst others Mrs. Seymour and Augusta, who were once more together, Henry Lyle, the Miss Delavilles, Mrs. Vere, and her son; an evening when the Miss Delavilles came out brilliantly in their peculiar style of absurdity, lionising both Lyle and Vere, and being so divided between the two that they scarcely knew which to flatter most—Vere and Lyle commenced an amicable discussion, urged on to it by the Miss Delavilles, who worried at both like a pair of terriers. It was a subject interesting to all, but not bearing upon the profession of either of the men, and, at least outwardly, both were perfectly good-humoured and free from personal feeling, although, as always they were, diametrically opposed in principle.

Vere prided himself upon being a perfect gentleman in public, and was generally acknowledged so. Henry Lyle was a



perfect gentleman at all times, without thinking on the subject.

"Is it not charming to hear them talk?" exclaimed Miss Bella Delaville to an elderly lady who was seated at a little distance, looking rather offended that the public attention had been taken off from herself.

"Oh, very," said she, in anything but an enthusiastic tone of voice. "And who is the dark one?"

"Mr. Arthur Vere, the author of the charming books 'The Modern World' and 'Things as they Are,' and all sorts of clever works," answered the younger lady.

"And his opponent?"

"Lyle, the artist. By-the-by, a namesake of yours."

The old lady took her spectacles from their case and placed them on her nose, and steadily scrutinised the profile of Henry Lyle's figure, for his face was turned towards some ladies who were taking an active part in the discussion.

She made a short noise like that of some lower animal as she did so, and waited still, keeping her eyes fixed upon him earnestly, for Miss Bella had flitted away and left her again alone, until he turned round his face full towards her. It was a beautiful face in its animation and enthusiasm, beautiful in its expression of intelligence and intellect, to those who admire that style of beauty, and the old lady might have looked at it with pleasure with no deeper feeling than any human being must or should have in all that is beautiful; but she examined Henry's face, all unconscious as he was of the observation he attracted, with more than mere interest, and rising from her



seat she walked up to where he stood, and as she came close behind him, said :

“ Henery !”

He had not heard his unfortunate name so pronounced since those never-to-be-forgotten days of his sad childhood, and the sound sent through his mind in an instant the recollection of that home which had been no home, the gaunt, grim figure of Miss Lyle, and all the petty tyrannies to which he had been subjected, even the last interview he had had with her when she had forbidden his again entering her house or claiming her name as kindred. Almost simultaneous with the mispronunciation of his name, he turned upon his heel ; but all these thoughts flew through his mind in the mere instant when, facing the speaker, he verified his anticipation in the sight of his grand-aunt.

Henry Lyle flushed to the temples as he saw her, with the same feeling that used to make him colour as an infant ; the old association was irresistible. Yet he frankly held out his hand to her ; then, offering her his arm, he led her back to the sofa which she had left, and took a seat beside her.

He did not speak for some moments, for the old shyness of his grand-aunt oppressed him, and when he did so, it was in a very grave voice, that he “ hoped she had been in good health since last he had seen her.”

Miss Lyle was totally unchanged. Time seemed to have lost his usual power in her case, for the wrinkles upon her forehead were the same as Henry remembered used to be when he had been a child.



Miss Lyle was in her heart pleased to find that the Lyle she had frequently heard spoken of was her nephew and former protege ; that a man might be a painter, yet a gentleman and a respected member of society ; which, in her vulgar and bigoted notions she had discredited. But she would not appear to unbend towards her nephew, and she spoke in the old rigid manner. Henry Lyle told her of his contemplated marriage, and she stared for a moment at the audacity of his daring to marry at all ; but remembering again that he was no longer a child or under her control, she relaxed into a condescending smile, and inquired who was the lady. Henry went to Augusta, and requested permission to introduce her to his aunt ; a request which made the poor girl quite tremble with nervousness, as she remembered all the particulars of that aunt's sternness, and glanced at the rigid figure on the sofa, so confirmatory of her known character. Henry begged her, as a favour to himself, to accompany him, and he might have felt the increased tightness of Gussy's hold on his arm at every step which brought them nearer to Miss Lyle. The old lady presented the tips of her fingers to Augusta, after the latter had curtsied with great deference, and Henry whispered to her to sit down by his grand-aunt, and "say something."

Say something ! The most miserable and generally most futile of all requests. The greater the necessity of the occasion, the less willing is the something ever to be said. Gussy felt as if she had not, nor ever had, possessed an idea upon any subject whatever. However, she strained every mental nerve, and at length succeeded in remarking :



"I have often heard Henry speak of you, madam."

"Humph!" ejaculated the old lady. "So I suppose. What is your name?"

Augusta told it.

"I don't like fine names," returned Miss Lyle, with ready rudeness. "Every girl has smart names now-a-days."

She seemed to consider that she had said enough to poor Gussy, whom she certainly had left without reply; so, turning towards Henry Lyle, who was looking very annoyed at the sharp manner in which she had treated Augusta, she recommenced her conversation with him.

"And pray how do you intend to live when you are married, Henry? What have you to marry on?"

"I must work," he answered.

"And what does the young lady say to that?" asked Miss Lyle, glancing towards Augusta.

Augusta smiled, and Henry answered:

"When Gussy showed the bad taste to take a fancy to me, she knew she was loving a poor man, one of the working classes. If she is content to cast in her lot with mine, she knows that while I have either a head or hands capable of labour, they will work for her."

"Humph?" again ejaculated Miss Lyle. There was a dash of the old independence in Henry's manner so obnoxious to Miss Lyle—an absence of proper servility to position, to wealth, and rich relatives.

The transient interest which the sight of her nephew had awakened, was subsiding, and Miss Lyle observed:



“That Mr. Vere, with whom you were talking when first I saw you, is a very fine-looking young man; I should like to have him introduced.” Miss Lyle, like many old women, was a great admirer of handsome young men, and perfectly open to flattery and compliment.

Henry answered to her remark in the affirmative, and offered to bring Mr. Vere to her if she wished it. The old lady became quite excited, and bridled and blushed as Vere bowed before her.

If ever a man possessed what are usually called powers of fascination, Arthur Vere did. This evening, he excited them to their utmost. He flattered and complimented, subserved and courted, while Miss Lyle patted him on the shoulder and rapped him on the arm, all which was received with the most beaming smiles on the part of Vere, while Miss Lyle drew an invidious comparison in her own mind between the young man by her side, who seemed wholly engrossed with her attractions, and her nephew, Henry Lyle, who, during the time he had stood by her, had not given her one flattering title, or told one pleasant untruth. Arthur Vere did not leave her the rest of the evening, and then not until he had obtained permission to call upon her; an invitation which Miss Lyle most readily gave the stranger, but which she had withheld from her nephew Lyle. Miss Lyle spoke to Vere of Henry, demanding his opinion, which Vere gave as he understood would be agreeable, appearing to palliate, and so inferring what was not expressly said; and the old lady gave her opinion of Augusta Leigh somewhat disparagingly, so that the angry blood flushed



the forehead of Vere for a moment, and he murmured something indistinctly, which was not in his companion's favour, yet he outwardly smiled, and replied :

“ Oh, she is considered, I believe, by some, extremely attractive, and perhaps her apparent want of intelligence may originate in timidity.”

“ Oh, of course you are indulgent to the opposite sex,” said Miss Lyle, laughing affectedly.

Vere smiled in return, and offered his arm to conduct her to her carriage.

The carriage drove away and he stood still upon the pavement, when another pulled up close to him, and Mrs. Seymour's name being called, he saw that lady approach, followed by Augusta, and accompanied by Lyle.

Vere watched them as they parted, and he muttered to himself :

“ Ever my opponent ; thwarting me at every turn, publicly and privately ; but it shall not always be so. You shall not have it entirely your own way.”



## CHAPTER XVII.

No invitation came to Henry Lyle on the part of his grand-aunt; but thenceforth Mr. Vere was at her house continually. She flirted with him as if she had been a young girl, and he paid to her all the attentions of a fervent, however mock, admirer. Vere's opinion was soon all to Miss Lyle, his advice was law. A sentence on his part would have healed the breach between Lyle and his aunt, would have replaced the nephew, perhaps, in the position which rightfully he should have held. All this Vere knew.

He spoke on the subject one day, when encountering Henry Lyle.

"It is a pity you and your aunt are not friends; she has a good property, has she not?"

"Yes," Lyle answered, "it is a pity, as you say, that she is not good friends with me, independent of her property. I am afraid she is prejudiced against me, and prejudices in the very



old, unfortunately, will not sometimes be combated."

"She is an obstinate old girl," said Vere. "You have expectations from her, have you not?"

"None whatever," said Lyle, frankly. "I have no claims at all upon her."

Miss Lyle occasionally mentioned her nephew's name, as if her conscience demanded self-justification for the neglect of the charge left her on a death-bed; and such mention always justified herself, as it revived the old feelings of indignation against Henry for his independence. Vere perceived at a glance the weak points of the lady; and this one on the subject of her nephew's independence of spirit he especially took hold of in his comments upon Henry Lyle's actions, half-defending, half-blaming, occasionally speaking almost admiringly of the very quality which Miss Lyle detested, and then, by an adroit correction, more than undoing any little praise he might have implied towards his rival.

Vere was too good a student of human nature ever openly to decry one man to another; and his ill-natured moderation of language would bring from Miss Lyle some such exclamation as the following:

"You are so generous, Mr. Vere; so liberal and indulgent! You know you are trying to make the best of what you cannot but in your heart condemn."

Vere smiled what he intended to be a pitying and indulgent smile; looked supremely handsome; Miss Lyle thought him the most fascinating man she had ever met with; and, dying a few weeks afterwards, disgusted her numerous satellites



intensely, and surprised not a few, by leaving to Arthur Vere her property unconditionally.

When Vere was so informed, the same expression came over him as had attacked his features the first night he handed Miss Lyle into her carriage. He had of his own a large fortune, and that left him by the old lady was quite superfluous. He assumed towards Lyle a feeling tone, which, although Henry could not have explained why, was most galling and impertinent.

"Most unlooked for!" he remarked, with reference to the will of Miss Lyle. "There is no accounting for the whims of old women. I suppose she must have fallen in love with me; but really it seems a great shame."

Lyle turned the subject as quickly as he could, but Vere did not leave off thinking of it, and with his eyes he followed Lyle from spot to spot with no very pleasant expression, in which a tincture of triumph, not angelic, was strongly mixed.

At this time there was published a pamphlet which made a sensation amongst all classes by the boldness of its infidelity and the utter recklessness of its principles, as well as by the talent displayed in its composition. It was without signature, and the fact of its author concealing his name gave a fresh interest to the publication itself.

It was a challenge requiring refutation from every honest man; and shortly after its issue such a refutation followed it. The answer created as great a stir as the original paper had done. It was couched in mild but decided terms, overthrowing most undeniably the statements contained in the infidel publi-



cation, setting forth from the first the falseness of the position occupied by its antagonist, and was frankly signed with the name of its author, Henry Lyle. The paper war now became one of general interest, and the universal talk of the clique wherein Vere and Lyle moved, at least.

The Miss Delavilles were worked into a state of enthusiasm unusual even to them.

Alone in his own room one evening, shortly after the publication of the first pamphlet, and before the refutation of it had been seen by any, Vere opened a parcel which had been sent him by his publisher. It was the answer by Henry Lyle.

He looked at the signature after having read the title, and exclaimed :

“What a fool to put his name to it ! He did not know with whom he has to deal, or he would have been less beautifully honest.”

He slowly read the pamphlet through, and once or twice, as he did so, his face flushed and paled, but as he concluded and carefully placed it amongst his papers, there was a fixed look of determination on his features.

“You have brought all your brains to work upon it, and you have done it well, Henry Lyle ; but we shall see who is the stronger yet. Do you think you have here settled the question ? I threw down the gauntlet, and you have rashly taken it up. I am glad it is you have done so ; I shall have more to say to you yet.”

The lamp which had been burning upon the table here flickered, fell down into the socket, and after one or two ineffectual



struggles to revive, went out. Vere laid the paper which he was holding in his hand upon the desk, and groped for means of procuring a fresh light. But in the dark he could not find that which he sought, and, walking to the window, he drew aside the curtains, in order to admit the light of the moon to assist him in his search. It was long past midnight, and she was high in the heavens. As he stood against the window, with the curtain drawn, the full pale light fell across his face, and made whiter the broad forehead which gleamed in contrast to the dark locks of his hair. To any man of taste or feeling so glorious an object must be arrestive—to an imaginative one, interesting. To the Christian who sees God in His works, the paths of heaven teach deeper lessons than any books upon astronomy can teach—lessons which lie too deeply in the heart ever to find full expression in words. On such a night as that upon which Vere looked come the waking dreams of the soul, proving to us each identically how true are all the things we have been taught by Him who “binds the sweet influences of Pleiades, and looses the bands of Orion,” so that we cease to wonder that the patriarch of old left without hesitation the homes of his childhood to follow in a new way just taught him, when we remember that by Him he was led forth by night “to look upon the stars.”

On such a night, we, as men, sink into nothingness before our own thoughts. The very majesty of intellect, shown by its reaching to the heavens, crouches into dust under the considerations which itself has raised; and our short life, which at another time will seem capable of comprising all our plans and



prospects, compresses into its true space, as a mere grain falling downwards with the never-ceasing rounds of eternity.

On such a night rises in the heart a lovelier star than any even in the expanse of ether—the star of hope—the hope of all these things passing away, with the wrongs, and cries, and lamentations of humanity, when nothing shall come to jar upon the music of the spheres—the hope of right, which the world is ever vainly striving after, and for which “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”

On such a night, does not this world, with its hopes, and fears, and pains, seem the distant unseen and only dreamt-of one, and the eternal world the stable foundation upon which our feet can ever rest securely? These are not things of which only “our fathers have told us,” or which “we have heard with our ears,” but they seem to have been imbred in our heart of hearts, beyond the power of any circumstances to shock. So we think then; and how is it when the day breaks, the sun shines, and the world begins to make a noise? Then God retires to heaven with the stars and the moon, and yet He is the God of work, as much as the God of contemplation. We may close our eyes, or hide our heads, like the ostrich, but the Presence is still here.

On this night also, as Miss Delaville entered her sleeping-room, the broad flood of light fell upon the floor, and before commencing to undress, she twitched the curtain across the window, saying to herself,

“I can’t bear that moon shining in upon me; it will be keeping me awake.”



That most ridiculous of men, Henry Lyle, who was always full of absurd fancies, also saw the moon, and drew the window-curtains open so as to admit the light, instead of shutting it out from view ; and fell asleep thinking of far-off scenes and days long gone by, as if that moonlight had had anything to do with them.

And Vere, whom we left standing at the window of his study, looking out into the night ? There was no softening influence in the moon to him ; her pale face gazed reproachfully into his, calling up half-memories of things which were or might have been ; yet there was an attraction in the very reproach she seemed to make him, for, with half-averted eyes, he still stood before the window, unmindful of the lamp which required relighting. Then a frown contracted the lines in his brow, and the pallor which from the first had overspread his face became sickly and unnatural. Hastily he closed the curtains to shut out the light of that which had forced into his mind unbidden and unwelcome thoughts, and turned into the darkness. It was doubly dark by contrast with the bright light he had left, and alone, at that still hour of the night, Vere covered his face with his hands, and, like a child frightened at the creations of its own morbid fancy, he shook and trembled like a coward.



## CHAPTER XVIII

"Is Valentine Leigh any relation of yours, my dear Augusta?" asked Miss Delaville, one morning.

Augusta started, and exclaimed, "My brother!"

"How very odd," rejoined the lady. "Did you not know he is in town? I met him to-day in Bond street, and it struck me since the name is the same as yours."

Augusta felt ashamed that things should be so, and she tried to imagine that her brother could not be aware of her nearness to himself.

"I have not seen him for years," she answered quickly. "He does not, probably, know that I am here."

"Not seen him for years! How very strange," continued Miss Delaville, somewhat disagreeably. "What could be the reason, my dear Augusta?"

"He has been abroad," answered Augusta, coldly; and feeling the question of Miss Delaville impertinent, she made



an excuse for leaving the room. As usual, in every difficulty of whatever kind, Henry Lyle was her resource. She begged of him at once to discover Valentine, and to send him to Mrs. Seymour's house. Henry was not long in doing so, and the following day he himself accompanied the young man to see his sister. Augusta gazed with a strange interest upon the brother she had not seen for years. He was but a grown-up image of the boy she so distinctly remembered. It seemed to her that she would have known him anywhere, meeting him by chance.

Valentine was rather awkward at this their first interview. Probably the consciousness of the little effort he had made to discover his sister, or the cool manner in which he had taken possession of every little thing left by their father, regardless of her comfort, confused him; or the recollection of the very unpleasant associations which must be in Augusta's mind accompanying the remembrance of their parting, years ago.

Valentine Leigh was an interesting-looking young man; very fair, and with agreeable features, but the lower part of his face gave an unpleasant trait of weakness and indetermination—the falling backwards of the under-jaw when the face was at rest—an indecision which was also implied by the uncertainty of his modes of expression in speaking.

It was a new interest to Augusta, reviving all the recollections of her childhood, and she with enthusiasm gave free scope to the fresh affection which the sight of her brother awakened.

From thenceforth, Valentine lived more at Mrs. Seymour's



house than elsewhere. It was easy to make excuses to his sister for not having exerted himself to find her before ; easy to persuade her that it was no want of affection which prompted to so unaffectionate a course. Augusta believed all readily which told in his favour, and forgot to reproach him for his prolonged unkindness and neglect of their father—a subject which Valentine himself carefully avoided ever alluding to.

And yet Augusta could not help feeling that the society of her brother was not congenial to her. There was a want of refinement of feeling about him, a prejudiced style of thought, although that very prejudice was towards what he considered to be freedom of opinion.

He requested one day to bring to Mrs. Seymour's house his particular friend, Mr. Clough Harding, "the very best fellow in the world. By-the-by, Gussy," added he, "I wish you had not engaged yourself to that stiff fellow Lyle ; Harding is just the man I should have liked you to marry."

Augusta coloured and felt annoyed at her Lyle being called a "stiff fellow ;" but Valentine was her brother, and she made no answer ; while Mrs. Seymour gave him the desired permission to bring his friend to her house.

When Mr. Clough Harding was introduced, Augusta was not influenced in his favour, for he seemed to her but an exaggeration or caricature of all her brother's worst features. The gentleman was vulgarly latitudinarian in principles, language, and appearance, and it was with some warmth that, upon her opinion being asked, Augusta afterwards expressed to her brother her dislike to such a style of man and



her fear that the evident influence he exercised over him might be prejudicial to Valentine himself.

"Oh, that's one of Lyle's absurd notions, you know," said Valentine. "You have been taking a leaf out of his book. Harding is a capital fellow—the best fellow in the world."

The "capital fellow" seemed very much attached to his friend Leigh in all sorts of ways. They were continually together; Harding being the substance, Valentine the shadow.

Valentine more than once alluded to difficulties under which he lay; and one day Augusta asked of him an explanation of his hints, and the whole matter came out. He had gamed away every sixpence which his father had left, having contracted debts almost beyond that sum, and he was ready to cry as he explained to his sister that he did not know what he was to do next, for he had no money even to go on with.

"It is to the gaming-table, then, that you go every evening?" inquired Augusta, "when you tell us that you have engagements?"

Valentine answered in the affirmative.

"And Mr. Clough Harding is your companion I presume?" said Augusta.

"Yes."

His sister looked so plainly disgusted, that Valentine added:

"Come, Clough Harding is a very good fellow, Gussy; I do not know what I should have done without him. I now owe him more than anybody else. He has continually lent me money."

"And, I presume, continually increases the debt?" suggested Augusta.



Valentine Leigh looked angry, and answered, "Come, it's not every man who will lend a fellow money in these days?"

"Now, Val," said his sister, "tell me why Mr. Harding has lent you money. Is it not in order to play?"

"Well!" answered he.

"Do you think that in so doing he acts the part of a friend towards you?" asked Augusta.

Valentine looked sulky, and gave no answer, for he had none to give; but shortly afterwards commenced afresh lamenting his unfortunate position, and vainly wishing he could "do something."

When Augusta recapitulated all that had passed to Lyle, he fully coincided with her with respect to Mr. Clough Harding, and as to the advisability of weakening as much as possible the intimacy between him and Valentine Leigh.



## CHAPTER XIX.

YET it was difficult to determine in what manner Valentine Leigh could be employed, if indeed he were found willing to work at all ; and this point was the first to be ascertained.

Valentine Leigh did not like Lyle : this feeling he had evinced upon several occasions, and the object of his prejudice was not unaware that it existed. Yet the knowledge of the difficulties to be overcome did not deter him from the attempt. Perhaps he remembered, in his reflections upon the subject, the weakness of character displayed by young Leigh, and upon this fact built, and rightfully, his hopes of success.

The very first opportunity given him was taken advantage of by Lyle.

Both Valentine and he, after spending an evening at Mrs. Seymour's house, prepared to return home : they stood together in the hall. Valentine looked uncomfortable at the collision, yet when they left the house, Lyle observed,



"We can walk together as far as you go."

Valentine became restless, but he murmured something which Lyle chose to take as an assent, and together they walked in silence for some minutes.

"Do you think of remaining in England?" asked Lyle.

"I do not know, I am sure," answered Valentine; "I know nothing as yet of what I intend doing."

The reply was given rather sulkily; but Lyle, without appearing to notice his disinclination to friendliness, resumed:

"Your sister seems anxious about your future plans, Valentine: now, as I am, or shall be very soon, so closely connected with Augusta, and consequently with yourself, you must allow me also to take an interest in what you intend doing."

Valentine gave no answer. Had he done so, it probably would have been to the effect that he did not desire any interest to be taken in his affairs on the part of Henry Lyle.

"I am an older man than you, Valentine, by several years," continued Lyle; "and perhaps I may be better able to judge of your position than you can yourself: now I am well aware that at present you stand in some difficulty."

"I think sir," commenced Valentine Leigh, in a defiant tone,—but Henry Lyle turned round short upon him, and looked him in the face with such evident astonishment, that the young man altered his voice, and added, "Augusta, I suppose, has been speaking to you about my affairs—that's the worst of it; I might have known that she would. I never told you anything of this."



"Why should you object to my knowing it?" asked Lyle. "I have not inquired into your affairs from mere curiosity and idleness, but in the hope that I may be able to help you. Can I not do so?"

"I do not ask anybody to help me," answered Valentine, moodily.

"Can you help yourself out of the scrape, then?" Lyle asked.

"I do not know."

"You do know," Lyle answered, resuming the authority which his real superiority might justly give him, although it was done almost unconsciously to himself; "you cannot help yourself. You are in an irremediable difficulty, if you are not assisted. You know that you are very much in debt; that your creditor would be by no means a lenient one, were you in his power. You know in your own heart, Valentine, that Mr. Clough Harding is not a true friend to you. You are very well aware that before long you will be in the Bench."

Valentine had turned his head aside, so that Lyle should not see his face as he listened, but he started several times during Henry's speech, showing that he was not overstating his liabilities.

"Is not all this true?" asked Lyle, after a pause.

"Who told it all to you?" Valentine asked in return.

"Never mind; it is sufficient that it is so, and that I know it. Now, Valentine, the next thing to be thought of is, how can it be prevented?"

"How can it be prevented?" echoed the young man, in a crying voice.



"As a first step, you must cease your intimacy with Mr. Clough Harding."

"And what else?" asked Valentine, sulkily.

"You must abandon the habits which have brought you into your present difficulty."

"Anything more?"

"And you must try to support yourself as an honest man and a gentleman."

"I must say you are rather cool," said Valentine, in an insolent manner; "I do not know that I ever asked you to look after my affairs, or to interfere in any way with me."

"And you consider the interference impertinent, you would say," suggested Lyle.

"Yes," said Valentine.

"I should have thought otherwise, when the interference is an offer of assistance, Valentine; but perhaps my way of advising you may have been unpleasant. At any rate, think of what I have said: you must acknowledge that my suggestions are right; do you not? You have too much good sense to object to them."

Valentine would have objected to them out of obstinacy, had he been able; but this allusion to his good sense placed him on his guard, and he answered,

"Yes, I suppose you are right; but——"

"Never mind the 'but,'" said Lyle. "This is your way, is it not?" he continued, stopping at the corner of a street. "I will here wish you good night; I shall see you again to-morrow, I suppose." And Lyle turned down another way,



towards his own lodging, leaving Valentine gazing stupidly after him.

Young Leigh felt restive, like a young colt suddenly pulled in, who did not as yet choose to acknowledge the right of the reins which controlled him. He fretted over the conversation of that evening, tried to persuade himself that Lyle was a fool, but his better sense denied the suggestion. He could not help acknowledging that he had met with greatly his superior in his brother-elect. He took refuge in feeding the dislike which he felt, or supposed that he felt towards Lyle, but the kindness shown in the latter's manner and voice that evening rose in judgment against Valentine, and he went to bed with a very mixed feeling, which he could not himself explain. He had half promised to meet Clough Harding that night, in order to carry out some project of folly or wrong, but he abandoned the idea, as if now he did not dare fulfil the engagement. He felt as if his movements would be known. By whom? By Lyle? Why should he care what Lyle knew of him, or thought of him? He was not afraid of Lyle, he supposed: and this thought chafed him more than any other. Yet he did care sufficiently to stay at home, and go to bed respectably, making some paltry excuse to himself for his change of resolution—an excuse which he tried hard to believe, but could not; and throughout the night his dreams were enlivened with visions of the gaming-table and the Bench, which would make him start in terror at the prospect.



## CHAPTER XX.

As Lyle had prophesied, so it came to pass, not many days after the foregoing interview. Valentine Leigh was in the Queen's Bench : there was nothing more to be got from him, and his dear friend Clough Harding was his prosecutor.

A more pitiable object could scarcely be imagined than Valentine Leigh, as he was left alone, after having been conducted to his new place of residence. His face pale with apprehension and annoyance, his frame listless and unnerved, himself totally unmanly and unmanned, he sat down upon one of the two rickety chairs which ornamented his little room ; and laying his head upon the creaking heavy table, he burst into tears.

“What should he do now ? what was to become of him ? to whom should he apply ? who cared whether he was in the Bench or no ?” were thoughts which passed through his mind. He remembered how Henry Lyle had told him of all this before.



At this memory Valentine commenced crying again. It was not all spite that Lyle had been in the right, for a better feeling mixed with his cause for tears.

"What on earth will Lyle think?" he asked himself. So he had begun already to care for the opinion of the man whose advice had given him such umbrage.

"I will write to Gussy, and tell her what has happened," said he; "but then she will go and tell Lyle, I know. What shall I do? Yet, anyhow, he must know it before long." And with this thought Valentine demanded a sheet of paper and other necessities, and writing an almost illegible note to Augusta, desired that it might be sent at once.

The rest of the afternoon was spent by him in great lowness of spirits, expecting momentarily some note in answer to his own: when, as the evening came on, there was a knock at his door, and upon his calling out "Come in," Henry Lyle entered.

Valentine Leigh blushed so visibly, even in the dusk, at his appearance, that Lyle said,

"Are you surprised at seeing me, Valentine? I was with Augusta at the time she received your note, and I thought it would be better to come than write."

Valentine looked awkward and uncomfortable, and Lyle resumed:

"Augusta knew no one else whom she could send to you. Perhaps she might have fixed upon a less unwelcome messenger; but let us put aside all private feelings, Valentine. Let us be friends, if we can. Will you tell me the reason why you dislike me?"



Valentine started at the feeling, which he imagined he had concealed studiously, being touched upon, and answered quickly :

“Dislike you ! what could give you that idea ? I am sure I do not dislike you. I——”

“Have you dined ?” asked Lyle.

“No, I forgot. I have been thinking of other things,” said Valentine, unable to recover himself from Lyle’s attack.

“Then,” said Henry, “if you will allow me, I shall order some dinner for you ; for you will not mend matters by starving yourself.” He left the room for a few minutes, and when he returned, Valentine rejoined,

“What made you say I dislike you, Lyle ?”

“Never mind,” answered the other, laughing ; “I hope I was mistaken, and that you do not do so, or will not henceforth do so. And now, until your dinner is ready, I must, however unpleasant to you, my dear Valentine, speak of your affairs. Surely this is no time for concealment. Will you not tell me to what extent you are involved ? I may perhaps be able to free you.”

“You ?” asked Valentine Leigh, with unfeigned surprise.

“Why not I ?” said Henry Lyle.

“Because, Lyle, I have always—in fact, I have never acted as a friend towards you. You do not mean to say that you would trouble yourself really in getting me out of this scrape ?” said Valentine.

“I have told you that I will help you as far as I can ; it is with that intention that I came here to-night. I first informed Augusta of my plan, and she urged me to carry it out ; for I



considered that I should not be justified in helping any one, even her brother, pecuniarily, without her consent; for already, virtually, my property is not entirely my own. Will you tell me how much your debts amount to, and we shall then see whether I can set you right."

Valentine still hesitated; his nobler feelings were struggling within him, and the tears which he had used rather freely during the day, were very nearly coming again. When he could command his voice sufficiently to speak, he said,

"No, Lyle, you shall not assist me. I have injured you in thought. I have tried to dislike you, although I could not have given myself a reason for so doing. I will not now benefit myself at your expense."

"Do you know, Val, that you will distress me very much if you refuse my offer," said Henry.

The other looked surprised, and Lyle added,

"It will seem to me as if your pride prevented your willingly accepting what you consider an obligation, which would argue that your dislike towards me is not yet turned to friendship."

"I wish you would not think I dislike you, Lyle," said Valentine, impetuously: "indeed I do not. I bear a very different feeling towards you now, whatever I might once have had. Won't you believe me?"

Lyle held out his hand to the young man, and again Valentine's eyes filled, but this time with no feeling which need have made him blush for his emotion.

"Then it is all right, is it not?" asked Lyle, cheerfully:



"we are to be friends as well as brothers. You make me out an estimate of your debts this evening, and we will see whether you cannot be free in a few days. Come! nonsense, Val: some day you shall do as much for me, if I am hard up and you are a rich man," said he, as Valentine took his hand and wrung it, unable to speak. "Good night! I will see you to-morrow morning, if nothing prevents." And Lyle left the Bench.

Several opprobrious epithets which had by Mr. Harding been applied to Henry Lyle, and which had been echoed by himself, recurred to the mind of Valentine Leigh, and brought a blush to his face during that evening; but he tried to wipe away the remembrance of them, and atone to his own conscience, by repeating several times to himself, "I was mistaken in him; he certainly is the very best fellow in the world. Clough Harding always was a fool: what did he mean by telling me things against Lyle?"



## CHAPTER XXI.

THE idea of Mr. Grant occurred to Lyle's mind, when thinking what situation could be procured for Valentine Leigh. That gentleman had always maintained his friendship for Lyle, taken an interest in his movements, and kept up a communication with him; but Henry had never claimed the often-repeated offers of assistance made by Mr. Grant.

He waited on him after business hours one day, and upon informing him of the reason of his visit, saying that he had a favour to ask of him, Mr. Grant at once expressed his readiness to do him any kindness he might require, only venturing a hope that the favour was one to himself.

"No, that it is not," Lyle answered. "It is in behalf of Valentine Leigh, who, as I dare say you may have heard, has lately been rather imprudent, and very much misled, and has placed himself in a difficulty."



“What, the brother of your lady-love?”

“Exactly,” said Lyle,

“I thought that you had been paying off his debts for him, young scamp! in a most unexampled spirit of generosity,” said Mr. Grant, laughing.

Lyle coloured as he answered, “It was not in reference to his debts that I would ask your assistance, sir. He has promised to work, and I am unable to get him any situation. I hoped that you might give him employment.”

“Well, so I will, for your sake: but I hope he will turn out more of a business-man than you were, Henry—eh? You never took to the ledger.”

“No, I confess I was, and am, uncommonly dull at such things,” said Lyle, laughing: “I trust Leigh will go on better than I did. I am afraid that I am scarcely the person to give a business-character to any one. Valentine promises to work hard; and if he only can be kept from evil influence, I believe he will keep his word.”

“But I say, Henry,” observed Mr. Grant, after a pause; “it must have been rather awkward for you to pay that young fellow’s debts. It must leave you, I am afraid, rather low.”

“It leaves me without anything to fall back upon, certainly,” said Lyle; “but I must work; and hope that we shall not feel the loss of what is gone.”

Mr. Grant laid his hand on Lyle’s shoulder affectionately.

“Well, tell young Leigh that it is all right, and I will not overwork him; but you need not tell him that, or he will think there is nothing to do; let him come to me, and I will set him



going. I am glad of an opportunity of obliging you, Henry. By-the-by, do you see where I have hung your picture? Not a very good light, you will say; but the windows are awkwardly placed, and I shall move it into the dining-room as soon as I can, after we have new-papered it."

Lyle told Valentine Leigh that "it was all right;" and the latter, full of gratitude to Henry, and expressions of contrition which he believed sincere, and determining to grow better for the future—his debts being paid, and himself free to start afresh, having solemnly abjured Mr. Clough Harding and his fraternity—entered on his new avocations; having been sharply scrutinized by Mr. Grant previous to so doing, in order that he might be properly inspired with respect and awe, Mr. Grant having come to a very shrewd conjecture as to wherein the young man's weakness lay.

Henry Lyle was aware that, for the time at least, he had gained an influence over the mind of Valentine. This influence was acknowledged by the younger man, and Lyle would not neglect the opportunity thus given him of impressing upon his memory the obligations, which hitherto Valentine had seemed to forget.

The evening before entering upon his new avocations—new in every sense to Valentine, in that he had been unused to exertion, excepting in a bad cause—he spent at the house of Henry Lyle. To hear the young man speak, a casual judge would have imagined that every better feeling of his heart had started into action to fulfill the obligations which now rested upon him.



"I will, Lyle, I can assure you, work like a horse if necessary. I will give up my former way of living, and be respectable, and quiet, and orderly. I shall never forget your kindness to me in my late difficulty; and you may depend upon me, that I will keep my promise to you, for your sake."

The assurances were large, but Henry Lyle laid them to the exaggerated feelings which Valentine at the time was experiencing, and let them pass unnoticed; but he remarked upon the conclusion of the foregoing speech,

"Not for my sake only, I trust, Val: for your own sake also; but above all, for the sake of your duty. We must build up higher motives than pleasing each other merely, or we shall find our principles fail us when we most require them."

"Oh! I make no profession of high principle, you know, Lyle; I never have. I suppose I have not any."

"I do not know exactly what you mean, Valentine. How do you make no profession of principle?" said Lyle.

"Why people who make great professions, you know, may be expected to be more particular; but I never have professed anything," Valentine answered.

"Do you not then consider yourself a responsible man?" asked Lyle.

Valentine coloured slightly, and answered,

"Why, yes, I suppose we all are."

"I think you are not singular in your very absurd way of reasoning; for, excuse me Valentine, it is extremely absurd. No one man makes, or can make, greater profession than another. We all make the same profession; all are required



to live by the same rule, and will all have to be judged by the same law."

Valentine looked uneasy and fidgeted in his seat, as he was ever wont to do when the conversation took any turn which was beyond the every-day common-places. After a pause, seeing that Henry Lyle waited, as if for him to answer, he said,

"But some men profess to be much better than the rest of the world, and of course, therefore, they are expected to live more strictly than those who do not pretend to such uprightness."

"You are still going on in the same popular mistake. To come to facts, Valentine: we have all been baptized into the same army, all have taken the same oath of allegiance, in the very same words. That oath is not more binding upon one than upon another. Some may keep it better than others, but still the oath has been taken; we are still sworn soldiers and servants, however we may live contrary to our profession. I repeat, one man cannot profess more than another, for the obligation we take upon ourselves is the very highest and strictest. You have professed, and do, as a living and baptized man, profess as much as the most exalted saint on earth. You cannot get out of it, Valentine, by any such trivial excuses as you just now made."

"But some men are not so strict as others, you know, Lyle, and acknowledge that they are not."

"What has that to do with the argument? That is quite another thing. Some men, unhappily, are infidels, and acknowledge themselves to be so, but their profession is the same



still, although they live as far from it as they possibly can. If men would but learn, in these days of enlightenment and universal inquiry, to understand the meaning of their own words, which they are continually using without a thought of their real weight, it would be a step forward. But, Valentine, we are all of us, at best, very Chinese. We think in the rules laid down by our predecessors. Our grandfathers did foolishly, and so we continue fools in many respects, continuing to hold the bad old customs, calling them, in our listlessness, good ; and the very worst of all, depend upon it, is the blindness to ourselves. Our fathers ate, drank, and died, refusing to know themselves because the knowledge was unpleasant ; and we still shut our eyes to the fact that more is required of us than of mere animals. We will not learn ourselves, because it is still, as it ever will be, a tedious and a disagreeable bitter lesson ; but it will be a far more painful one when, having been neglected through life, it has to be learned in a few days, perhaps a few hours, on a death-bed ; or a fearful one, should it burst upon us in the twinkling of an eye, when the studying time is passed, and the great examination has come ”



## CHAPTER XXII.

AUGUSTA had left off her mourning for her father, and the day of her marriage with Henry Lyle drew near. She had engaged herself to him with the full consciousness of his position. As he himself had said, she knew him to be one of the working classes. Perhaps in her love and the enthusiasm of youth, the cares of labour were not entirely appreciated by Augusta; but they were again and again represented to her by Lyle, and it was with the full intention of being in all respects a help to him that she pledged herself to be his wife.

"The world, perhaps, will not exonerate me, Augusta," Lyle said, one morning, "for rashly bringing upon you the risk of poverty, for you know my way of life. I must work for the daily bread we shall require. Will you, with all these things presented to you, still brave all, and be my wife?"

"What else can I do, Henry?" answered she, laughing to avoid the seriousness which she felt coming upon her. "I have



no choice ; if you will not marry me I must become a beggar, for Mrs. Seymour cannot be expected to go on keeping me much longer."

Then, looking up into his face, she continued, "What is poverty ? Want of luxuries all my life I have been accustomed to. You know how we lived when my father was alive. It will be from no recollections of splendour or even ease that you will take me. But what is poverty ?" she repeated ; "do you think I should be poor if we could but even, as you say, procure our daily bread, that being honestly earned, so long as you were with me ? Should I be rich, Henry, if I had all my mind can think of wealth, without you ? The moment I am yours, I own the greatest treasure which my heart can conceive earthly ; you could not more endow me. Poverty and wealth appear but empty words, made only for those whose hearts are incapable of loving as we love."

"You think so, dearest ?" he answered, looking earnestly into her face.

"Am I not rich if I have to work with my hands, so long as your smile urges me on ? What will it influence me if all the world despise us because we are poor ? You, Henry, are my world ; your pleasure my object ; your life my life ; your approving eyes the only earthly praise that I should seek ; your fame and advance my glory ; all ambition merged in you, all pride in the hope of seeing you happy."

"And yet, Augusta, my own loved Augusta," said Henry Lyle, drawing her to him, and holding his arm round her as he



spoke, "would not this be styled romance, high-flown want of thought and prudence for the future?"

"Do you think it so, Henry?"

"It is what I might have expected you to say, and what makes me almost fearful, in the pleasure which it gives me, hearing it," he answered.

"Then, let it be styled what it may," said Augusta, "I spoke but the feeling of my heart."

"And shall we then, Augusta, strive to serve God together? struggling perhaps, suffering it may be, but struggling honestly, suffering patiently and hopefully, and with high objects ever urging us on?"

"Yes, together," she answered; "there can be no suffering deserving of the name while we are together. Oh! my Lyle, there is nothing on earth I dread but separation! There can be no pain but to part, no trial but what is bearable cheerfully while with you: nothing is difficult, if but you are with me. I was left an orphan, and the tears I shed were honest tears of regret; your love dried them, and taught me to submit. When Philip, the companion of my childhood, the last link of my old home, was taken from me, you had proved to me that it was better so: and did I murmur? You taught me first to *feel* there is a God, where before I only knew it: teach me to serve Him with you."



## CHAPTER XXIII.

"Is it true?" asked Vere, suddenly, finding himself alone with Augusta, "that you are shortly to be married to that man?"

"Quite true," Augusta answered. "You have known for some time past that I intend doing so."

"You are rash, Augusta. I have warned you before now, and I do so again, that you will repent the course you take."

"How very absurd you are, Mr. Vere! Can you imagine for a moment that any warnings, threats, or forebodings on your part, could alter my determination to marry a man to whom I have been long engaged, and whom I love and honour?"

She looked him full in the face as she spoke, and his eyes presently fell before hers, and he rejoined:

"*Absurd* do you call it? That man has crossed me where I will not submit to opposition; he has been my evil influence



since I first saw him. As a child, he was ever between me and my plans, and as a man he has pursued the same course."

"He might have been your good influence, had you chosen," said Augusta.

"*He!* You might have been, and might be still, Augusta; he never. I hate him, as a disappointed and injured man only can hate, and you shall learn to hate the memory of having linked yourself with him."

"I think you miscalculate, Mr. Vere: besides, I do not consider you have the power to injure him or me, as you seem to suppose."

"Do you think not?" said he; "cannot I then injure you through him? You profess to love him. You would not love as the generality of women, Augusta, I believe." He pressed his hand to his forehead, as if the words he spoke pained him extremely.

"You believe I love him, and yet you think to frighten me from clinging to him?" she asked.

"I am an inconsistent fool," he answered.

"I do believe you love him; and the thought maddens me; I cannot tell a lie to you."

He paused, then presently rejoined: "Cannot I injure him, do you think? Have I not already commenced my revenge? Whose was that old woman's property rightfully but his: and whose did it become, and by whose agency?"

"Was it then you who deprived Henry Lyle of his interest with his grand-aunt?" asked Augusta.

"Who else?" returned Vere.



Augusta shuddered. "What an unhappy man you must be!" exclaimed she, as if thinking aloud.

"Happiness, Augusta," said he, gravely, still persisting in calling her by her Christian name, as if he had a right in her—"happiness is but a fancy, a name: it dwells in prospective, and in the retrospect, but it is never present. Men are thought and styled happy by each other; but what one amongst them can say of himself, 'I am happy?' and even that fancy, that name of happiness, is but comparative. We do not understand the word which one man uses as the same idea we would express ourselves. Happiness cannot be, while man is possessed of hopes beyond fulfillment, and desires ever increasing. You mistake; I am as happy as *I* could ever be."

"Impossible!" she returned, "with a heart filled with such thoughts as yours, a head with such plans."

"Happiness," he continued, unnoticed her interruption, "is of our own making. If I say 'I will be happy,' I am so."

She sighed, and shook her head sadly, as she looked at his beautiful face, lighted up with the triumph of an evil angel, and as she did so, he added, in the sentiments of that angel,

"Never fear but I shall make my hell a heaven!"

"You acknowledge that it is a hell, then?" said Augusta, quickly.

He knit his brows. She added:

"I hope not, for your own sake, Mr. Vere."

"Surely," said he, gently, "that is an unkind wish on your part, Augusta."

"The kindest towards you," she answered; "for I fear, did



you succeed in forgetting Reality, by which means alone you could make yourself a Heaven here with your present wishes, if all went smoothly with you, and while all the world flatters you, that you will never learn yourself."

"Learn myself!" he repeated. "Do you not think I know myself?"

"Do you?" asked she.

"Oh, Augusta," exclaimed Vere, in a burst of passionate feeling, "would I knew less of myself! for indeed it is a hateful study. You make me speak the truth against my own worse nature—you make me forget the character I would assume, and be at times, almost honest."

"Why assume any character? why not be yourself?" Augusta asked, earnestly.

"Because," he replied, "my self is hateful to me."

The door opened, and Mrs. Seymour entered, and as she did so Vere held out his hand to her gaily, to wish her good morning, while Mrs. Seymour was profuse in her regrets that she had not been informed that Mr. Vere was in the drawing-room, that she might have joined them earlier.

So Augusta and Henry Lyle were married, with no fears upon Augusta's side—no regrets, excepting that her cousin Philip was not with them at the time.

The Miss Delavilles had "taken up" the interests of Lyle and Augusta, so they were enthusiastic in their delight at the marriage, and in their admiration of all connected with it, as also in their professions of friendship. No sooner were they married than Lyle returned, with redoubled vigour, to his work.



Mr. Arthur Vere found that he had an engagement to an old friend, and left town a few days previous to Augusta's wedding, after having greatly distressed his mother by looking pale and careworn. She strove by every means to discover wherein lay the cause of his illness, but in vain; every inquiry on her part was met by her son with short, rude answers, and she watched him earnestly from day to day with trembling nervousness, the tears occasionally filling her eyes as she thought her darling's health was in danger. He left town without telling Mrs. Vere that he was going, and she continued mourning for him, thinking of him alone, and fretting because of his paleness.

Mrs. Seymour was a woman of great kindness of disposition, and from the first she had guessed pretty accurately the position in which Mrs. Vere stood to her son. She had too much perception to allow such a conjecture on her part to be perceived by Mrs. Vere; but the sympathy she felt in the poor lady's loneliness she evinced by kind acts and words, by visiting her, and sitting for hours patiently listening to the praises of Arthur, and, when she could honestly, joining in them.

Mrs. Vere would sometimes, even in the midst of these fond dwellings on her son, glance jealously towards her hearer, as if she feared that Mrs. Seymour might not entirely agree with her in her praises, or might imagine that her partiality led her beyond the bounds of her own belief; and in the glance there was a species of defiance of any one daring to question, even in thought, the truth of all she said, or daring to remember, above all, that Arthur Vere was an unkind son and an unprincipled man.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

THERE was a touch of romance in beginning life in so independent a manner, literally working for support, and economising in a way almost ludicrous; for the late settlement of Valentine Leigh's debts left Henry Lyle considerably poorer than he had expected to be.

To those who may look upon affluence as happiness, and poverty, as the world calls it, the reverse; the high spirits of Henry Lyle and Augusta might have appeared rather surprising. It was not that they dreamed away their days in castle-building for the future, or spent their time in inane repetitions of love and constancy. Augusta became at once a housekeeper during the morning, while Lyle worked at his easel, and in the evening the companion of her husband in his duties or recreations.

"What a number of poor people you seem to know, Henry!" remarked she one day, in a walk, during which Lyle had been saluted by a great many of the people.



“Some of the poor people, as you call them, Gussy, may be richer than we are. I do know a great many of the lower orders, and of poor people also in the real sense. I never miss an opportunity of making acquaintance with anybody who is thrown in my way ; for it has seemed to me ridiculous that we should all be living in the same world, made in the same image, and of one blood, and yet know so little of each other. There is no necessity for formal introductions amongst the working classes, so I take advantage of the absence of etiquette.”

“I thought you used to be so shy, Henry,” said Augusta, smiling.

“I am quite as shy now, Gussy, dear, as I ever was,” said he ; “but a natural infirmity does not obviate the necessity of my acting up to my opinions of right. It must be a great advantage to have assurance, certainly.”

“I wish you would let me go with you, and become acquainted with all your friends ; will you, Henry ?” asked Augusta.

“Will you like to know them all, and feel a sympathy in their advance and welfare, Gussy ? I had hoped you would. It makes this world a much more interesting world, to know and be known by many, even of the poorest faces, that you meet.”

“May I help you if I can, Harry, at least in caring for them ?” asked Augusta.

He gave her no answer but by a look, and after a pause she said :



“But yet what can I do? I have all the desire, at least I think and hope so, Henry, to be of use to others; but when I calmly dwell upon the subject, remembering what an immense world this is, and what an atom one individual in it must be, I can but repeat over and over again the question, ‘What good can I do?’ almost hopeless of a satisfactory answer.”

“Gussy, if you have already asked yourself the question, you may be sure the answer will be shown you practically before long. A man or woman never yet, I believe, honestly desired to live for others, but occasions sprung up under his or her feet, and those who have appeared to themselves the humblest and most useless of created human beings have often become the very Howards of society, through the ardent wish which has actuated their feelings and actions to lessen in some degree the distress around them. Yet should the occasion never come, should we never live to realize those dreams which the heart is ever forming afresh—who would part with a desire, such as you have just expressed, Augusta, though it might remain always a wish only?”

“The old proverb, ‘Virtue is its own reward,’ which our copy-books teach us, and which, as we grow up, we learn to doubt or disbelieve, is true after all in the sense of feeling. Every virtuous impulse is such a true enjoyment, that, were a good man buffeted through the world during all his passage in it, he has an inward smile at the absurdity of mankind, who can for a moment think that its ridicule or contempt can detract from his real happiness; as if he said in thought, ‘You come too late with your animadversions and oppositions. I



am already paid, although my projects in realization were foiled.' Do you see?" concluded Lyle, turning his eyes towards Augusta.

"Yes, dear Henry," said Augusta; "I feel inclined to emulate sometimes Miss Delaville, and call you all sorts of pretty names; but with this difference, that I should believe all I say."

"Perhaps Miss Delaville does also, Gussy," said Lyle; "at least I should prefer thinking so, or many of my best compliments must fall to the ground. Those ladies are never-failing resources whenever I have been snubbed either publicly or privately. If society abuses a picture of mine, I know I shall find at least two ladies to declare it is perfect; and though all the world should laugh at me for my want of argument in disputation, I know where to find ready advocates."

"Your want of argument, Henry! I cannot understand that last pamphlet of yours," said Augusta, "for I have not read the answer to the first. Have you it?"

"Yes," said Henry Lyle, his gravity returning; "but, Gussy, you must not think to read it. It can do you no good, my darling; although I should not fear its doing you material harm, and could only give you pain, as it did me. There are ideas which, once known, are difficult to get rid of; and horrible sentiments, when allowed to assume the tangible form of words, will become part of the mind, where before they could scarcely have entered, from being but shadowy and unconnected inspirations."



"What a fearful man your correspondent must be!" observed Augusta, after a pause.

"Poor wretch! I fear he has abused a magnificent intellect to the worst purposes. His writings show an immense depth of thought and a splendidly-cultivated mind; and, throughout, which is the saddest part to me, Augusta, a touch of poetry, occasionally almost of deep feeling, which shows too plainly that the fine sentiments which God placed in his heart must have been violently crushed, to reduce him to his present state of moral madness."

"I wonder if he is a young or old man," observed Augusta.

"Young, I should imagine," returned Lyle, "for all his principles are violent and impetuous; young, I hope, for his own sake. An old bigot is much harder of conviction than a young one, you know, Gussy. Old people are very difficult to deal with where they are wrong; for the natural sympathies, to which we seek ever to appeal, are too often dried up, or falsely biassed. There is usually some tender spot left in the young to which we can apply; some remnant of childhood yet unworn out, of innocence, which becomes more and more shaken off, until in age it is entirely parted with. I am speaking, Gussy, of the general crowd, not of individuals which we might select. We know that there are youthful hearts made hard, and old men who have retained the simplicity of childhood; but the general habit of the world is hardening, and we become year by year less susceptible and trusting. The principle of our faith is to continue through life that child-like spirit with which we started; or, if we have



departed from it, to bring us back to the original innocence, setting up as our type our first selves, the dependent and trusting infants ; so that the child who is set in the midst of us as our example, is to each of us the memory of what once we were, before we knew the world to be wicked and unworthy, when we believed all things and trusted all things."

"It seems to me that you are, and ever will be, a child in heart and principle," thought Augusta ; but she refrained from giving expression to the thought, and remarked, "I wish I could spontaneously think in all things as you do, dearest Henry ; I wish you would continue always teaching me, as now. I have never forgotten the first day you spoke to me of these things. Do you remember it as well as I do, Henry—that day when you walked home with us ? From that moment, I seemed to myself to shake off a slough of indifference and selfishness, which until then I had unconsciously worn—to become sensible of my real position as one of the million. What do I not owe to you !"

"Not to me, Gussy," said Lyle ; "I could not have roused you from apathy and indifference by any mere words of mine ; the cause was higher than I only ; believe it, dear."

From that hour Augusta entered fully into all Lyle's plans of usefulness, accompanying him in his visits amongst his poor friends and neighbours, or, when she was so required, going of herself, identifying herself with the wants and wishes of others, and becoming gradually more and more human and actively kind-hearted ; all of which was, of course, very ridiculous in the eyes of Miss Delaville and her sister Miss Bella, and those



of their way of thinking, and at times very engrossing to the thoughts as well as time of Augusta. Those were happy days, as she confessed afterwards, in looking back upon them, when, the morning's work over—real, not play-work—the afternoon's walk, and the daily acts of kindness and sympathy, sometimes in words only, it is true, but always heartfelt—come to an end; in the dark hour Augusta would sit upon a low seat by the knees of Lyle, and sing to him with her guitar.

The old song always was returned to, however new or more brilliant might be others, none more lovely—"Home, sweet Home;" and in singing it, no tears but those of happiness would rise to Augusta's eyes, not even at the remembrance that on such a night she had sung to her father that same song, and afterwards he had died.

They heard frequently from Philip Wilson; his letters always full of new schemes, speculations, and plans, but telling little of realization; full of affection and remembrances of former days, and kind wishes to themselves; so that in reading them, Augusta, could almost have imagined she heard the kind words from Philip himself, and would picture to herself and Lyle his handsome, animated brown face and excited manner.



## CHAPTER XXV.

As Augusta and Lyle were walking down the right side of Oxford street, their regard was attracted by the approach of a beggar. He was a respectable-looking man, although poverty-stricken in the extreme, apparently making no show of his misery, or forcing his distress upon public notice, as the manner of most beggars is. He respectfully touched his remains of a hat as Lyle and Augusta glanced towards him, and appealed to their compassion in looks only, for he stood silently and still.

"Poor fellow!" said Augusta to her husband; "speak to him, Henry."

The man perceived that he was the object of their remarks, and touched his hat again, saying as he drew near:

"If you would give assistance to a poor soul, sir, who has not broken his fast since yesterday morning, and with three children a-crying for bread, you would do a real charity, sir. It is a hard thing, young lady, to be reduced to begging," he



continued, turning to Augusta: "it is not what I have been used to; but what can an honest man do, when thrown out of work this last ten months?"

"How were you thrown out of work?" asked Lyle.

"By an accident, sir. I injured my hand; and when I applied upon my recovery, my place had been filled up. There's more hands than work, you see."

"And now do you do nothing?"

"What can I do, sir, excepting beg? and begging's a bad trade; but so long as I keep honest, I ought to bless the Lord. It is His will, and we must submit."

The man's manner of speaking seemed superior to his appearance and position, and Augusta's first impulse was to give him money, but she waited for her husband to act. Lyle demanded minutely of the man his then place of abode, of which he gave a full, and apparently candid, description.

"And your name?" said Lyle.

"Collins, sir; William Collins."

Lyle wrote down the address, while the man stood expectantly waiting his pleasure; then bidding him follow to the nearest baker's shop, he desired the tradesman to give him bread, saying at the same time to Collins.

"You must not think me harsh in refusing to give you money, but we are so frequently imposed upon by tales such as yours, that it becomes a necessity to guard against imposition. I do not mean to say that I doubt your statement, knowing nothing against you: if I find you to be an honest man, I shall be glad to assist you otherwise."



"Thank ye, sir," replied Collins. "I know very well that it is difficult for gentlefolks to act when there is so much deception always about; and that's what makes honest men starve. We should easier get a living if every one told the truth, you see."

"I will come and find out your place of abode to-morrow, if nothing prevents," resumed Lyle; "meanwhile, good morning."

The man blessed them in the usual style, and stood upon the pavement where they had left him, looking after their retreating figures until they were lost to sight.

The next day Lyle set out in search of William Collins' lodging, and Augusta begged to accompany him. She had become interested in the man's appearance and manners, and the straightforward way in which he told his story.

It was, as usual, a noisy and unpleasant neighbourhood, overflowing with children, of all ages, and in all stages of paleness and precocity; but the place was found without much difficulty; the number was also there, and Lyle inquired whether William Collins was at home.

There was a dirty woman emptying a pail of dirty water down the dirty alley, and to her Lyle addressed himself. She stood and demanded what name he said. Lyle repeated, "William Collins."

"I don't know no such a person," replied she, scratching her head; and calling out to a boy a few yards off, she demanded of him if he knew a William Collins. The boy also scratched his head, but found no more information by so doing than had the woman.



"I was told No. 6," said Lyle, "in this court. Has no person with such a name ever lived here?"

"This here is my house," replied the woman; "I have had lodgers, girls, but never had any William Collins."

A man who had been smoking at a little distance drew near, in order to overhear what was going on; and taking his pipe from his mouth, observed,

"You've been took in, that's what it is. What might the man be?"

"I do not know what he may be," said Lyle. "He told me he had been a journeyman, but he also told me he lived at No. 6 in this court: one statement may be as true as the other."

"Ah!" said the man, and replaced his pipe in his mouth.

Augusta felt annoyed and bewildered, so much so that the man turned to her and said:

"It's always the way with them vagrants, miss; they're not of no use coming after."

Lyle wished the people good afternoon, and Augusta and he left the court.

"He must be an impostor, Henry," said Augusta, in a tone of disappointment.

"It seems so," he replied; "at any rate, he did not wish us to inquire further into his affairs. It is not unusual for beggars to give a false address."

"Have you met with such before, then?" asked she.

"Very many times, Gussy; and expect often to meet with such again. There are rogues in every class, and we cannot



expect our beggars to turn out all story-book cottagers, interesting in their humility and poverty, and overwhelming in their gratitude ; although I have known many such also," answered Henry Lyle.

"Those are really story-book cottagers, are they not?" said Augusta, another day, remembering Lyle's former words, after she and her husband had been sitting with a family who made no show of poverty, without being able to conceal it, who asked for nothing and yet thanked warmly for what was offered, and who spoke cheerfully and hopefully of the present and the future, however blank both might have appeared to others, for them.

"And yet," said Lyle, "you will be surprised to hear that I remember that very family a complete contrast to what it is : abjectly poor, and sullenly callous to every feeling of right, apparently beyond redemption."

"How was that?" asked Augusta.

"The man spent his whole wages in drink, and the woman, and even children, were reckless of everything."

"And you taught them better?" Augusta inquired.

"The man was not a brute, Augusta ; he was capable of conviction, but he had been dealt unwisely with. The woman was roused by adversity instead of improved, and made a wretched home for her husband, and the children were utterly ignorant. Yet there was good ground to work upon, for Williams is honest and truthful. If men would but work with judgment, very little influence might effect such a change as that we speak of. We—I speak of gentlepeople, men and



women of education—have always the influence of our superiority over the poor ; why do we not all exert it ? A man of any sense must be convinced of what is palpably to his own advantage.”

“ But might he not be convinced, and yet refuse to reform ? ”

“ Very true, and so it is often the case ; fortunately it was not so here. Williams waited apparently for the opportunity of rising superior to his vices ; many, I believe, so wait ; and we, who might, never give them that blest opportunity. He is now a temperate man, as well as an industrious one.”

“ No wonder they are attached and grateful to you,” observed Augusta.

“ They are more grateful than the services I have been able to render them would seem to call for. Do you know, Gussy, that a very little kindness goes a great way with the poor. The Williamses always overrate what I have done for them.”

“ Or you underrate it, Henry.”

“ No, I think not ; we are too apt to feel like a good Samaritan, after having bound up our neighbour’s wounds, and to say mentally to every other man we meet, ‘ Why don’t you go and do likewise ? ’ ” said Lyle. “ I fear that humility is a very rare virtue, Gussy ; I wish I had more of it.”

“ I think people are not really aware of what qualities they possess. You constantly hear men accusing others of faults which are the most glaring in their own characters ; or taking to themselves blame, where we should imagine them most without reproach.”

“ Yes, you are right : we do not know our own hearts. Do



you not meet with men imagining themselves gruff and unfeeling ; and others, who have not nearly so much kindness of disposition, flattering their own imaginations that they are all heart ?”

“ I can imagine the latter case,” Augusta said ; “ for all would wish to appear amiable, one would think ; but why any should assume a fault which they have not, is to me a mystery.”

“ Have you ever met with men who professed to be more unprincipled than they really would dare to be ? Have you ever heard a young man speak as if utterly reckless of religion and feeling, glorying in being unmanned, professing ‘ to care for none of these things,’ so that you might justly afterwards feel surprised at discovering that this same young man says his prayers regularly, and reads his Bible ? These are always *very young* men, Gussy ; men in *name* only, who think to astound women by their boldness in vice, where they have no other means of making themselves remarkable. If you ever hear a man so talk, although he may chance to have signs of manhood on his face, you may put him down at once as having but very shortly left school ; as a very small midshipman will think to awe his relations upon his return from his first cruise by bringing out a round oath, and hopes that thus he establishes himself, in the eyes of his mother and sister, as ‘ a man of the world.’ ”

“ I think, if such boy-men as you speak of could know how easily women, however young, see through their folly, and



how they despise them for it, they would seek some other means of recommending themselves to our notice."

"It is to be hoped that they all in time will learn the lesson," said Lyle. "Boys, as a class, are the most difficult of all subjects to deal with, especially when they begin to consider themselves men."

"They always appear to me to be thinking in every movement and action, 'I am a man!' I feel inclined to say, 'Well, you are not the only one; look about you, you will see plenty more, better specimens of the race than yourself.'"

Lyle laughed. "Who gave you that idea?" he asked.

"No one, or everybody, rather."

"And yet, perhaps those very men, Gussy, were they driven home to their real hearts, would confess their inferiority in stronger terms than we should like to use of them. In the course of my life I have learnt something of human nature—the most useful of all studies—and I have seen the greatest contrarieties in the outward, or worldly, and the inward, or home man. I repeat, we do not know our own hearts; men profess qualities and feelings foreign to them. I could tell you of such personal mistakes which have come under my own observation. I am acquainted with two brothers of the name of Carter, who some day I will introduce to you, who have lived all their lives under a mistake, and upon whom reason and argument are thrown away."

"Tell me about them," said Augusta.

"No, you shall become acquainted with them, and learn



this piece of human nature for yourself. You must keep your observation always on the alert, as you go through the world, Gussy; for knowledge is on the right hand and on the left, waiting only to be acquired by us," said Henry Lyle. "How gravely we have been talking to-day!" he added, as they reached their own door.

"I always like to talk gravely with you, Henry," Augusta answered. "I can talk nonsense only with those to whom I am indifferent. I never talked idly to you from the first moment I saw you; excepting that, I forgot, you did not then talk at all."



## CHAPTER XXVI.

THEY were two strapping young fellows—those brothers, Richard and William Carter; energetic, enterprising, full of good humour and pleasantry to all, excepting to each other: and yet they lived together, worked together, played together, and, we believe, slept together. Their ages were twenty and nineteen, and they were both of them prepossessing in appearance and manners. They were masons by trade, both having the same tastes and abilities. Lyle had known them for some years, and had several times had opportunities of furthering his acquaintance with them, as they worked in the neighbourhood of his own residence.

Lyle pointed out to Augusta Dick Carter, as the young man touched his paper-cap to him one morning, while climbing past the window of the adjoining house in order to make some repairs upon the roof.

“The brother is probably not far distant,” said Henry, “for



they always contrive to obtain employment under the same master, notwithstanding their hatred of each other."

"Hatred of each other?" asked Augusta, in some surprise.

"Yes," rejoined Lyle; "when one speaks of the other you would imagine them to be a pair of Cains, but yet I have an idea that there is more bark than bite about their dispositions. It was to them I alluded when I spoke to you one day of our ignorance of our real feelings. Now, I should not be surprised if Dick yonder gives us a little conversation next time he crawls across the window-sill; if not, I will address him on the subject of his brother."

It fell out as Lyle surmised: Dick Carter paused as he passed the window, which was open, looked in, re-touched his cap, and then said,

"Good day, sir; and the lady too. Fine morning."

"Very fine indeed," answered Lyle, going to the window, in order to prolong the conversation. "I hope you have a good job."

"Why, yes, sir, pretty well. We are repairing the roof, which is in a precious bad way, with the weather and what not; and time enough, too."

"Are you alone?" asked Lyle, anticipating the answer.

"Only Bill, sir: he's there, and a-throwing bits o' dirt on the top of my head. Hallo, you stupid!" he called out to his brother; "be more careful, can't you? Never see such a awkward lout in my life," continued he, turning to Lyle, who could with difficulty keep his countenance.

"I thought William was a very good and clever workman," observed the latter.



"Yes, sir, a good workman enough. Oh, yes, Bill's clever at his trade, anyhow."

"You always work together?" said Lyle, interrogatively.

"Yes, sir, worse luck! I'm always being bothered with him."

"It cannot be much bother, though, to you," said Lyle, "for it must be pleasanter for brothers to work together than strangers. You are used to each other, you see, and understand each other."

"We ain't no ways brothers," said the young man, contemptuously. "Perhaps we understand each other too well, and know each other's ways too well, for all that. Bill ain't of no account to me, sir."

"And yet he should be of some account to you, my friend," said Lyle; "you were born of the same parents, and can never through life be indifferent one to the other."

"Yes, we were born of the same parents, and good parents, too, they were; but, somehow, Bill ain't my sort of man: we never could take to one another. But maybe I'm keeping of you, sir, with my talk, and the master will be after me for loitering this way. Good morning, Mr. Lyle, and the lady. Hallo! what are you after, Bill? If I catches you, I'll give it you, I will; kicking slates on to a fellow's shoulders, you!" Which latter was addressed to the offending Bill, who was sprawling upon the roof above like a spread-eagle face downwards.

"Here comes the other one, surely, by his likeness to Richard," said Augusta, as another man looked into the window a few minutes later. The guess was immediately confirmed by his inquiry,



"Hope you are well, Mr. Lyle? I thought it was your voice I heard just now, speaking with Dick."

"I am glad to see you," said Lyle, kindly, "and glad to find you both employed so near to me. I hope you and Dick are getting on well."

"Well, sir, we get on as well as we may expect, thank God; but I should get on better, maybe, if it warn't for Dick. I wish he was out in America, or anywhere so that I could lead a quiet life."

"Do not say so," said Lyle, "for you do not mean it. I know you, Carter, to be a man of more principle than really to wish such a thing; you know your duty better, both to God and to your brother."

The man blushed, looked foolish, and scratched his head, which is invariably a resource amongst the lower classes.

"What makes you speak so unkindly, so unaffectionately of your brother?" asked Lyle. "It is distressing to hear you: it sounds so unlike the love you should feel for him."

"Love?" replied the young man; "I don't love Dick; I never did care for him."

"Indeed, you mistake," answered Lyle; "you do care for him, very much. You do not know your own heart."

The man laughed, and answered good-humouredly,

"Yes, indeed I do, sir. I never did care for Dick, not I. I never liked him, boy or man, and never shall like him, neither. You can have no idea how aggerawatin he is to me."

It struck Henry Lyle that there might have been no aggravation in Dick's ways, had his brother been so totally indifferent



to him as he professed to be ; but he kept the reflection to himself, and as William Carter left the window, Lyle thought over again the opinions which once he had expressed to Augusta.

Henry Lyle and Augusta returned to their several employments, which they had left in order to observe the movements of the brothers Carter, and for some hours the two masons were forgotten : when they were again brought to their memories, it was in a violent and alarming manner.

There was a scuffling noise, a spluttering of mortar, slates and dust ; a dead silence, and then a shriek from the roof.

Augusta and Lyle simultaneously flew to the window. Beneath, upon the pavement, lay the figure of one of the brothers, apparently senseless, and bleeding ; while William was frantically descending the ladder, which was placed against the roof where he had been working, utterly regardless of his footsteps, pale as a sheet, and trembling with excitement.

It was from him the shriek had arisen, as Richard, in an unguarded moment fell.

Now, Henry Lyle was a most ridiculous man in some things. There was an hospital not many streets off, where, of course, any man who met with an accident might, and ought rightfully, to be conveyed ; but upon some paltry consideration, that the mere movement—that distance might aggravate the pain occasioned by the fall, the idea of the hospital was not for a moment entertained.

Richard Carter was not a gentleman, and it is extremely uncomfortable at any time to have a household upset by the



introduction of any person foreign to the establishment—an invalid more so, even though he may be highly connected ; but an invalid mason, a mere vulgar man ! No one with any knowledge of what is *the thing*, no one with any proper regard for the usual ways of action ; more, no one with any consideration for what the world would think, and what “people would say,” would have acted as Henry Lyle acted on this occasion. True, Dick Carter was a fellow-creature, and a suffering one ; we all know that ; but no one could expect a gentleman to receive into his house a wounded, bleeding, fainting man, all covered with dust and dirt.

Lyle opened the hall-door, and, forgetting his hat, ran bareheaded into the street, to the spot where Richard lay. William was striving to raise him vainly, weakened by excitement and agitation as he was. He had with his handkerchief been wiping the blood and dust from his brother’s face ; and as Lyle approached, he looked up at him, every feature twitching.

“Look here, sir ! What’s to be done, Mr. Lyle ? I can’t make him come to.”

He looked wistfully into the face of his brother.

“Are you dead, Dick ? Oh ! do answer me. Sir, do you think he can be dead ?”

The poor man laid his face upon his brother’s breast, and broke into convulsive sobs.

Meanwhile, Henry Lyle had felt the pulse of Richard Carter, and ascertained beyond a doubt that he was still alive.

“Come, come, William, my dear fellow,” said he, “be a man : Dick is not dead. Help me to carry him into the house.



"We will send for a surgeon, and he will soon be all right, please God."

The man raised his head from his brother's body, and brushing his shirt-sleeve across his eyes, assisted Lyle in raising and conveying Richard into one of the ground-floor rooms, where, a surgeon having been procured, he now recovered, having sustained no further injury than very severe bruises and knocks, although it seemed almost a miracle that he had not broke any limbs.

William returned to his work, not only that day, but far into the night, it being moonlight weather, in order to accomplish his brother's task as well as his own, being profuse in thanks and acknowledgments to the Lyles for their kindness towards Dick, who, as soon as he was able to do so, insisted upon resuming his daily occupation, saying it was "a shame to make that fellow Bill do double duty."

When "that fellow Bill" heard his resolution, however, he combated it fiercely, declaring that he "preferred working like a horse; that he did not want any assistance, and that Dick was a fool to attempt work as yet, with his head in such a state; but Dick always was a fool." Whereupon the brothers squeezed each other's hands, unperceived, as they thought, by Henry Lyle; and the next minute Bill was whistling on the roof, and up and down the ladder, carrying clods of mortar sufficient to break any ordinary back.

When alone together, after all these things had gone by, Henry Lyle laughed to Augusta, and remarked, "No one can have any idea how 'aggerawatin' those brothers are to each other: no wonder they entertain such a mutual dislike!"



## CHAPTER XXVII.

ONE day Lyle and Augusta walked out into the country. Augusta was too much a sailor's daughter to affect over-delicacy and weakness : she was quite capable of walking several miles, and did not hesitate to own it.

They had gone by train to the outskirts of town, and took to their feet as the country scenery commenced. It was through uninhabited lanes they wandered ; but they met many others seeking fresh air, like themselves. It seemed as if here squalor and misery never came, for the cottages within sight were white and cheerful-looking, the fields were rife with crops, the very curs barked impudently, as if they had had good dinners. It was a relief to meet with no imploring faces, no outstretched hands demanding assistance.

Lyle did not say so, but he thought thus ; and it was as well the remark had not been given utterance to, for he judged hastily, after the sight of his eyes at the moment.



Augusta and he were talking merrily, and laughing at everything or nothing, when their mirth was suddenly checked, as they turned the corner of the road, by a sound which appeared to resemble a groan. They at once ceased their talking, and listened. It was repeated, and presently they came upon an old man who was sunk down by the side of the road.

"He lay with his face turned to the ground, his hand pressed against his side, and his whole frame expressive of suffering, while at intervals low groans burst from him.

Lyle stopped and accosted him ; but at first the man seemed too self-engrossed to pay attention. When Henry spoke again, he raised his head from its prostrate position, and made an effort to touch his hat.

"You appear ill," said Lyle.

The man groaned again.

"What is the matter?" asked Augusta.

"I am often took so, my lady ; but it can't last long. It will wear me out soon. It is an asthma fit, sir," he continued, turning to Lyle ; and then relapsing into weakness, he bent his head down upon the bank.

"An asthma fit ! Who told you it was asthma ?"

"That's what it is, sir ; it takes me in the chest, and well-nigh does for me. It comes on in convulsions and fits ; it's ague, that's what it is."

"Ague and asthma are very different things," said Lyle, unable quite to understand the diagnostics of the complaint from the man's own description ; "but why do you lie there?"

"What can I do ? asked he. "I can't get on my way, and



I haven't a farthing to pay for help to any one who'd give it. Oh ! and he relapsed into groanings and contortions.

Augusta's eyes filled with tears. "Poor old man !" said she ; "do, Henry, give him something, or hire a cart to carry him."

"There is no cart near," answered he ; then, turning to the man, he observed. "If you saw a wagon passing, you could hail it, I suppose, to give you a lift?"

"Yes, sir, I dare say," said the man.

"And here's to pay the carter ; we cannot expect him to take you for nothing," said Lyle, giving the man a shilling, and moving on.

"Bless you, sir ! bless you, young lady ! and the asthmatic patient made an attempt at wiping his eyes, then groaned, and again turned his face to the ground.

Lyle and Augusta had not walked many yards, when the latter turned her head to look at their late object of interest. He had risen to a sitting position, and was fumbling in his hat for something.

"Oh, look, he seems better now," exclaimed Augusta.

"Yes, he does indeed," observed her husband with a half-smile ; and then added, as some other passengers approached the spot where the old man lay, and the sufferer writhed in their sight, "and he seems worse again now."

Their walk was rather long that day, and they returned by the same road which they had come. As they drew near to the spot which had been the scene of their interview with the old man, Augusta felt surprised at seeing a dark object still by



the wayside. It was getting dusk, so that it was not very distinguishable, and she said, half in joke,

“I hope that is not our old man, still in his asthma fit.”

They walked gently up to where the object lay, and no sooner were they within hearing than their ears were greeted by a groan, and they perceived that the figure lay with his head turned to earth, and his hand pressed upon his side. Lyle and Augusta stood still, and looked at him attentively, without speaking. The man knew that some one was attracted, and after two or three more prefatory groans, he said,

“Oh, how ever am I to get home? I haven’t a farthing to pay for a lift, and I am so bad. Oh!”

“That is strange,” observed Lyle, “considering I gave you a shilling but a few hours since to help you home.”

The man ceased his groaning, looked up quickly, and recognizing Lyle and Augusta, grumbled out something apologetic.

“Come, get up and walk home,” said Lyle, sternly; “I believe you to be about as asthmatic as I am. If you do not, I will see if I cannot make you. If there was a policeman within reach, I would give you in charge.”

The man slowly rose, and looking sulkily towards Augusta and Lyle, walked away.

“We have been taken in, Gussy,” said Henry, smiling.



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

“AND now, Gussy, will you prepare yourself to see a very different side of human nature from any which you have met with, since with me—a man upon whom kindness seems to take no hold; who, to judge only by outward appearance, is insensible to gratitude?”

“Why do you go and see him, then, Henry?” asked Augusta.

“Because, who can tell—I cannot—whether he will always remain so, or whether he is even now so callous as he outwardly appears? Besides, I have an interest even in his surly returns for my attention. I should be sorry to lose sight of him.”

“Does he only compose his family, then?” said Augusta.

“Yes, he lives alone, as a hermit; although, perhaps, not quite as an anchorite. I do not know his former history. There may have occurred some facts to account for his bitterness of spirit.”

“And is he poor?”



"Very ; but too proud ever to ask for assistance. He is not an uneducated man, as you will observe if he can be persuaded to talk."

"What is his name ?" Augusta asked again.

"Bertram."

"Why, is not that the man to whom you sent the warm clothing last night, by Mrs. Williams ?" Augusta said.

"Yes ; he was miserably dressed last time I saw him."

"I must say, I should not feel disposed to send him anything, if he is so surly and ill-tempered," said Augusta,

"His surliness does not make him feel the cold the less, Gussy," said Lyle, laughing ; "perhaps, indeed, more, as good temper is usually a comforter."

"But he does not deserve kindness, Harry."

"That is no plea whatever, Augusta ; and it is a bad trial for ourselves that habit of questioning whether a cause is deserving or no before we take an interest in it. It is too often made an excuse for folding our hands. We should ask rather, Is such an one in want ? instead of, Will he return an obligation with becoming gratitude ? We will not go any further and apply the argument to ourselves, for we all know what deductions may be made always from such a plea as want of desert."

Henry Lyle had not coloured the picture he had drawn of Bertram : he was surly and ill-tempered in the extreme.

He was interesting in appearance, from the stalwart height of his figure, the decided features, and long grizzled hair which hung upon his shoulders. He was seated with his back to the



door as Lyle pushed it open from without, for it was unlatched, and wished him good afternoon.

Bertram turned round hastily at the sound of Lyle's voice, and moving back his chair from the fireplace, at which he had been gazing, although empty of anything like fire, he grumbled out something in answer to the salutation.

"I have brought my wife to see you," said Henry Lyle.

"Oh, have you?" answered the man, glancing towards Augusta for a moment, but without asking her to take a seat. So without waiting to be invited, she sat down upon a box which stood against the wall of the room.

"You have no fire," observed Lyle; "you must be cold to-day. Have not you any coals?"

"No, I have not any," answered Bertram, with the air of a man whose honour had been insulted.

"You had better get yourself some then," returned Lyle, offering him a shilling.

Bertram made no movement towards taking the money, so Lyle laid it upon the mantelpiece.

Nothing was said of the clothes which had been sent him on the previous night, although the man had them on him; neither was any acknowledgement made now of the gift, which yet he did not refuse.

"He certainly is surly und ungrateful," remarked Augusta, when Lyle and she had left the cottage; "our last attempts with the poor have been very unsuccessful. Remember the old man by the wayside, who cheated us; and further back, recollect that man who called himself Collins. I think we fall in with all the unfavourable specimens."



## CHAPTER XXIX.

REALLY, this is very discouraging," said Augusta, with a sigh, after she and Lyle had walked in silence some few yards, "it is enough to make us leave off every effort to assist others: all the world seems so ungrateful."

"Stay, you are too fast Augusta," answered Lyle; "it is very discouraging to be imposed upon, but it should not be so; and never can be sufficient excuse to leave off every effort at assisting others. All the world is not an imposition, although a great part of it may be. What do we look for in assisting others, that we complain if they disappoint us? Gratitude, I presume, as the general cry is that the poor are an ungrateful set. Now, I will not stop at present to discuss that question, and to prove to you that the poor as a class, are not ungrateful. We will speak of the accusation you have made against it that this is an ungrateful world; let us suppose, without argument, that it is so. Do you not recall to mind some such words as



the following: 'And do good, hoping for nothing in return.' We ever hope for payment in feelings, or in eloquent words and acknowledgments, for anything we have done, or we should not be dissatisfied with such an issue as we have seen to-day. Grant that Bertram is graceless and thankless: the fact of his being so did not absolve us from our duty towards him; had we failed in it, Bertram would still have been to blame for his want of gratitude, and we also for our want of kindness towards him. Now I trust that at least we have done what we could; it may have been useless, but we are not to blame for the issue of things when we have used the proper means. Do you agree with me?"

"Yes," said she. "Go on, Harry."

"It is an excuse very generally made, without scarcely a thought of the absurdity of it. A man, upon being unkindly used by another, will exclaim, 'I have ever treated him with forbearance, but since his ungrateful behaviour I will do so no longer.' One is discourteous to his acquaintance, and the acquaintance foolishly remarks. 'He will find that if he is rude, I can be rude also; if he gives himself airs, he shall receive airs from me.' In what is the retaliator better than the aggressor? The man can no longer justly condemn his friend for unkindness when he returns him the same coin; nor can the other say that his acquaintance should not be rude, when he acknowledges himself capable of the very same thing. It is as if we justified ourselves in lying to one who is a liar, or in stealing from a thief. So, if the world treats us with want of gratitude, and we withdraw our hand from helping others,



we become more ungrateful than the world in shirking our duty towards Heaven. Duty is absolute, irrespective of circumstances and of feeling. The commands are, 'Do—give—love.' It is not added, 'If it is convenient to your sentiments and opinions.' ”

He waited for Augusta to speak, but she answered nothing, excepting by pressing her hand against his arm.

“ Suppose we spent our whole lives in attempts, Gussy, and only once in life succeeded in finding a deserving object—that object might have died unhelped had we not sought him—we had not lived in vain. But I think we need not draw even our experiences of honesty amongst our fellow-creatures into so narrow a limit as that. The plea for idleness or indolence, which is made on the score of the world's ingratitude and hypocrisy, comes usually, I imagine, from those who know least of the world. It is not those who have mixed most with their fellow-creatures who dislike them most. The greater the true knowledge of human nature, it seems to me, the more we must learn to sympathize with it, with all its weaknesses and faults. I do not speak the word world as some understand it. I intend mankind in general. A man must love himself; and each leaf of the human volume which he studies, is in so many respects a reflex of the original type which he loves, that he must learn to take an interest in the temptations, weaknesses, sorrows, errors even, to which his own heart cannot but acknowledge kindred.”



## CHAPTER XXX.

"WHO is that boy to whom you were just now speaking?" asked Henry Lyle of his friend, Richard Carter, after the latter had parted with the youth of apparently fifteen years of age.

"A lad who lives in our court, sir; a natural, I fancy. He has always been the same," replied the mason.

"He seems a good-natured lad," observed Lyle, looking after the boy, who, in his desire to oblige Carter, had loaded himself, to all appearance, beyond his strength.

"Very much so," said Richard, in return. "Willy is always ready to lend a hand to help another, but he enjoys very bad health, sir."

Lyle thought the *enjoyment* alluded to was, perhaps, questionable; but he did not stop to rail at Carter's mode of expression, but demanded,

"How do you mean, Richard, a natural?"

"Why, sir, he is not fit for work, or anything of the sort.



He has always been a strange kind of boy, and perhaps is none the better for the way in which he lives."

"Who is his father?" asked Lyle.

"Why, the cobbler in our court, sir; you must have seen him. Willy has been in the hospital lately, along of having broken his arm, and is only now out. The father is no ways bright himself, for the matter of that."

"And does this boy do nothing?" asked Lyle.

"Nothing, sir, excepting when the neighbours may give him odd jobs; and what is to become of him, I don't know. Well, Willy?" continued Carter, as the lad returned, and stood vacantly, awaiting further directions: "this is Mr. Lyle," directing his attention towards Henry; take off your cap, why don't you?"

Willy Benson smiled stupidly, and acted as he was directed, then stood as if quite indifferent to what was going on.

"He don't seem to have any feeling, as it were," resumed Richard Carter; "one might talk and talk, but I doubt if he would understand—he is quite incapable of understanding."

"Hush!" said Lyle, in an under tone; "do not speak so before him."

"Oh, bless you, sir, Willy takes no heed of what we say."

"I doubt that," returned Lyle; and, walking aside with Carter, he continued, "Has the boy always been as you say, a natural?"

"I believe so, sir."

"Does he think himself one?"

"Oh yes," said Carter; "he knows he is not right."



“And has no effort been ever made to procure him employment?” asked Lyle. “Is he taught nothing? Do his father and mother contemplate his remaining as he is all his life, without any means of support?”

“His father and mother are poor people, you see, Mr. Lyle; and Willy never did take to any work, and his mother, I fancy, don’t like to part with him.”

“I say, Richard,” said Lyle, “leave off telling the boy, or saying in his presence, that he is silly, will you? I can assure you that it will be a likely way of making him worse.”

Richard Carter stared at Lyle in astonishment but he answered,

“Certainly, sir, as you say it; but Willy knows very well himself that he ain’t fit for much.”

“Do you think that I could do anything for the Bensons?” asked Lyle, after a pause.

“Why, sir, they are very poor, as I said before; and poor people don’t find it difficult to discover wants. The man is a hard-working man enough, but he can’t always get employment; and as for the woman, she is but a poor thing. I think it wouldn’t be time thrown away to take a look at them.”

Henry Lyle nodded and smiled, and when he returned home he detailed to Augusta the conversation which had taken place with Carter. It was not many days before they found the cottage, or rather room, where the Bensons lived.

We all know that people, rich or poor, carry their characters pretty well displayed about the rooms in which they live. Thus, there was something unpromising in the rucked-up



matting at the door, the latch fastening disjointedly, the untidy and injudicious placing of the different pieces of furniture about the Benson's place of abode. Yet there was a friendliness of manner about the people themselves which was encouraging to the Lyles; for a first visit to any, high or low, is always to a certain extent awkward.

Cloths or dusters had to be removed before two chairs were ready for the visitors to sit on, and slops of water to be wiped up before the floor was fit for their accommodation; but all these arrangements were made good-humouredly, and amidst a great many words on the part of Mrs. Benson, for it seemed that Richard Carter had forewarned the matron of the probable visit of Mr. and Mrs. Lyle.

"I met your son," commenced Lyle, after the first remarks had passed, which served to place the new acquaintances upon an agreeable footing—"I met your son the other day with Richard Carter, and felt interested in the account he gave to me of him. The object of my present call is to inquire further about Willy, and see whether some employment could not be procured for him; for it will never do that he should continue idle all his days: he will soon be a man, and it would be a sad thing that he should be left without the means of support."

Lyle had addressed himself to Mrs. Benson, but the father of the lad took no heed of such small points of etiquette; he glanced towards his son, who was standing by the door of the cottage, and back to Lyle, and shook his head in a manner to put a stop at once to any such visionary schemes.



## CHAPTER XXXI

"He's simple, sir, poor fellow ! that's what he is. He isn't able much to work or anything ; his head ain't quite right ; it hasn't been for some time past ; he's quite simple."

It was in vain to attempt stopping the eloquence of Benson. Lyle tried once or twice to speak, but the man would continue, while the poor youth himself looked certainly confirmatory of the character given him, by partially turning his back upon the visitor, and playing nervously with his own fingers.

"Take off your cap, Willy, to the lady and gentleman ; don't stand there with a cap on ; you ought to be ashamed," continued Benson, with a look of pity for the boy addressed towards Lyle and Augusta.

Willy blushed scarlet, as if he had only then recollected that he stood covered, and quickly pulled the cap from off his head, and threw it on a chair.

"Will you come and see me, Willy ?" asked Lyle, kindly. And here he gave his address.

The boy looked stupidly up at him, caught by the tone of his voice, and was about to speak.

"Oh yes, sir, I will send him," interrupted the father, without giving his son time to answer. "He shall come."



Augusta spoke to Willy, but he had relapsed into unconcern, and repeating the hour at which he was to visit them, Lyle, with Augusta left them.

"I should wish to speak to that man alone," observed Lyle, when they were in the street; it seems to me that there is a great mistake somewhere."

The following day Willy Benson was punctually at the Lyles' house. He was an interesting-looking youth, apparently about fifteen or sixteen, but upon being questioned he gave his age as nineteen. He was slight of figure, and pale, with a large, prominent forehead—a forehead upon which Henry Lyle built most of his conjectures and anticipations. Lyle spoke to the boy with friendly ease, in case he should be shy, but that, he soon found, was a quality Willy did not possess. True, he enunciated slowly, as if he had, or had had, an impediment in his speech, but he answered readily enough the questions put to him.

Was he fond of reading? Yes, he had taught himself to read. Could he write? Not much, but he would like to learn. Did he ever draw? He had tried; he thought he could draw; he was very fond of pictures, and all such things. How did he employ his time? In making ornaments, which he afterwards sold.

"And who taught you to make such things?" asked Augusta.

"No one," said Willy. "I learnt it of myself."

"That boy, or man, is no idiot," said Lyle, after the youth was gone. "That there is something out of place, I see; his



brain has been shaken, I believe ; but some qualities have been brought out in stronger relief than they might otherwise have shown. Those people take the very best plan of fast making him an idiot, though. I must speak to that father about him."

To "that father" Lyle spoke on the next opportunity given him.

"You are wrong, decidedly, in your treatment of Willy," said he ; "it were sufficient, indeed, to make him what you suppose him, an idiot, to be subjected to being continually called one."

The man stared at Lyle in amazement. Henry continued :

"In his own presence you declare him to be simple, and soon he will become content to be thought so, without an effort at exertion. I presume you have pursued such a course ever since he was a child?"

"He has always been simple-like, sir," said Benson ; he was never like to other boys : he used to sit as a child, talking to himself, or playing alone, and never would care to go into the streets."

"And I suppose he gets worse instead of better?" suggested Lyle.

"He has been getting worse every year, sir."

"And will continue to get worse," said Lyle. "Now, my good man, does it not strike you it had been better to have treated your son as if he were a rational creature, capable of some reflection and exertion, instead of reminding him hourly that you look upon him as a mere machine? If you tell him he is simple, he will learn to consider himself so ; whereas the boy is ingenious, and on many subjects intelligent."



“Oh, in some ways he seems more 'cute than others; in regards of anything like fancy-work, and the like. Ask his mother.”

Lyle, as in courtesy bound, turned towards Mrs. Benson, who had been listening mutely to what had been said, and who, upon the appeal made by her husband, opened her mouth to give expression to the following wisdom, having previously dried her hands, which were steaming from the soap-suds over which she had been engaged, that she might be able to give her undivided attention to the subject under notice :

“There it is, you see, sir; Willy can do anything, as he says, in a fancy way, such as houses, peep-shows, and what not; but in other things, as you will be understanding, he isn't. I just mentioned to you, sir, as what it is I mean: he never could when at school do anything, not in a summing way, or arithmetic, or such; was you to bring him a question of law, or anything in respects of such, which he couldn't. I just mention to you, sir; for you, as a gentleman, understands the sorts of things I mean, which don't come at all in his ways; though in regards of the matters I spoke of, he is quite able, and always was, as in other affairs he is quite simple, as I was a saying, which it isn't.”

She ceased her speech, to which Lyle had listened with supernatural gravity, his face wearing a clenched appearance, and his eyes fixed upon a work of art in a tinsel frame against the opposite wall.

“Good morning, Benson,” said he, hurriedly; “good morning,” to the speaker, not trusting himself to look towards her; and



without further remarks he seized his hat and left the cottage.

One or two passengers looked with surprise at him after he had gained the street; for men do not generally stamp with laughter upon a public pavement, and get red in the face, with tears in their eyes, when they are quite alone, with no object present more amusing than a lamp-post.

Willy Benson from that day went frequently to Lyle's house; indeed, he partook somewhat of the nature of a domestic animal, coming at all unexpected times, glad to be able to offer his services, however small, and always anxious to show his readiness to oblige Mr. or Mrs. Lyle. On one occasion he arrived full of importance, with some hideous little ornaments intended for the mantelpiece, which he had manufactured himself.

"They are for you, ma'am," said he, blushing with awkwardness, and speaking in his thick and unintelligible tone of voice; "I made them myself." Augusta thanked him warmly, and accepted the offering.

"That boy is not wanting in gratitude, you see," observed Lyle, after Benson was gone, "and yet that beautiful latent quality was unknown, perhaps, even to himself."

As Henry Lyle had said, Willy Benson was not an idiot; but weak health had impaired his mental faculties, and indulgence in idleness had made him little better than an automaton.

A few months even made a surprising improvement in the lad, and Augusta took great interest in urging into development the faculties which had been so long neglected. Miss Delaville, as always, could not allow so strange an occupation to pass unnoticed, and upon seeing Augusta place on one side



a copy-book, in which she had been writing round-hand, moral sentiments, observed,

“Are you learning to write again?”

“The book belongs to a boy whom I am teaching to write,” Augusta answered.

“La, my dear! you teaching a boy to write? What age is your boy? what boy? whose boy?”

“A poor boy,” said Augusta; “a half-witted lad we know, who is anxious to learn, but has grown almost into a man without any one to teach him.”

“And you are teaching him to write? Well, indeed! but that is very kind in you. I should never think of doing such a thing: indeed I should not. What gave you the idea? How very odd!”

“Oh, Henry told me to teach him,” Augusta answered; “Henry has taught, I should think, more than a dozen people to read and write, whom I could name; it is the best service we can do a boy or girl I think, who has been neglected and untaught.”

“Oh, to be sure; and very kind and good in you,” replied Miss Delaville; “but what an odd idea! You and Mr. Lyle are really most original people: you seem to look upon all the world as a species of property of your own, I do believe you do.”

“I do believe with you,” said Augusta, laughing, “that Henry does, to an extent; he makes practical the maxim, that all men are brothers.”

“Well, do you know,” exclaimed Miss Delaville, with enthusiasm, “I like that; I think it is a very beautiful idea, and it ought to be made practical, instead of merely visionary



Oh, my dear Augusta, I admire you, I do indeed, for your philanthropy and efforts to do good; I think they are most praiseworthy: and as to Mr. Lyle, he is a perfect philanthropist; I think his is a beautiful character."

Augusta smiled, as she ever did when her husband was the subject of praise.

"Do not you think so?" continued Miss Delaville.

"I," Augusta replied, at a loss for words where her feelings were stronger than any mere phrases of compliment could express, and colouring deep crimson with emotion—"I think there is no one like him."

"You have not inquired after your friend Mr. Vere," said Miss Delaville, presently starting a new subject of conversation.

"Friend!" echoed Augusta; "I do not know that I can rank Mr. Vere so highly as the word you use would imply."

"I always connect the two together, you know," resumed Miss Delaville—"your husband and Mr. Vere; they are my two *beaux ideals*, and Mr. Vere is really so amusing. I always repeat to him all about your paupers, to make him laugh. You are not offended, my dear Augusta?"

"No," Augusta answered, "I am not offended; but your words struck me as rather strange, following immediately upon your expressed admiration of the very conduct which you say you turn into ridicule."

Miss Delaville colored slightly, but she laughed it off, saying,

"Oh, I don't mean half I say, my dear creature: you take things so seriously. I dare say I tell a dozen stories in a day: it's my way"



Very pleasant way!

"But to return to our subject," resumed Miss Delaville; "Mr. Vere and your husband are not by any means alike, after all. Mr. Vere is really a shocking man—quite a character. Mrs. Jerningham told me——But of course you must know."

"I don't know to what you allude," Augusta answered.

"Why," replied Miss Delaville, "he has always been unsettled, as they say, in his principles; but now, I believe, he makes no concealment of them. Indeed, I myself have heard him say some quite equivocal things; but of course it would not be gentlemanly to bring on discussions about such things in public: and Mr. Vere, I must say, is a perfect gentleman. Why, my dear Augusta, what is the matter? You look quite alarmed, I declare."

"I feel more than alarmed," said Augusta; "your words make my blood run cold. How horrible! how fearful! I hope, indeed, you may be mistaken."

"Indeed, no, I am not. Mr. B—— told me distinctly that Vere is an infidel, or an atheist, or whatever it is called. He disbelieves everything. I could tell you more, only you must not say it again." And without waiting for any such assurance of Augusta's discretion, the lady rattled on: "You know those pamphlets which have lately been published, and which your husband has answered?"

Augusta nodded.

"They were written by Mr. Vere, I am told; only he did not venture to put his name to them; for, you see, one must keep up some appearance. Did you read them?"



"No," Augusta answered. "Henry forbade my doing so. I am glad now that he did."

"Oh, I read them; you have no idea how very shocking they were; and so interesting. Some of the arguments in them quite haunt me still. What a splendidly clever man Mr. Vere is!"

"Yes, unfortunately for himself and others, as it has proved," said Augusta. "I wish you had never told me this, Miss Delaville."

"La, my dear! one would think Mr. Vere was a brother of yours, you looked so shocked. I dare say there may be other men as wicked as he in the world."

"Perhaps so; but I would rather not learn their wickedness. I am very glad Mr. Vere is not in town."

"Oh, I am not, I can tell you. He is a dreadful loss to us. Our evenings are nothing without him; and now that Mr. Lyle is married, Miss Gussy, things are very dull. Mr. B——, though, is a charming man; don't you think so?"

"I do not know exactly what you mean by the term. I remember you used to style Mr. Vere a charming man, and yet you cannot say so of him now."

Miss Delaville half laughed, and opened her eyes at Augusta's remark.

"I think, with all his faults, Mr. Vere is the most delightful man I ever knew."

"I could not now look at him without thinking of what you have told me," said Augusta. "He is no more than a moral murderer."

"My dear Augusta!" said Miss Delaville, looking shocked.



"You do not like the term, I see. I have an unfortunate habit of calling things by their true names. I hope I may never see Mr. Vere again; for I fear I should be unable to treat him as hitherto."

"But what have his private opinions to do with us?" asked Miss Delaville: "we are not accountable for all our associates being of proper feelings, I suppose?"

"I see you do not think with me; and, perhaps, the thought is more a feeling than an argument. I know, were I to see Mr. Vere now, I should feel a great antipathy to shaking hands with him."

"That is an odd confession, my dear, I must say; it does not sound very charitable," said Miss Delaville, with the air of a reformer.

"Still, I cannot unsay it," returned Augusta. "I must return to my old source of congratulation, that I shall not be put to the proof."

Augusta forbore telling her husband of Miss Delaville's information, partly from the half-request which had been made by that lady that she would not repeat it, but chiefly that she thought Henry Lyle would be distressed at finding his old schoolfellow, and the man with whom he had been so long personally acquainted, the same with the unknown correspondent whose sentiments had so indignantly pained him. She wished, though, that she might have questioned him as to her own feelings with regard to Mr. Vere; for she could not, on reflection, retract what she had said to Miss Delaville, or otherwise than feel an aversion to holding out her hand to an infidel.



## CHAPTER XXXII.

"WHAT do you think Willy Benson could be made into? for a clever man he must be turned out before we have done with him," said Augusta, laughing. "Really, he begins to write very well, Henry."

"I have been thinking on that subject several times lately, Gussy," answered Lyle. "The boy has not constitution sufficient for hard work: it must be a light trade only which he can learn. At the same time, he is ingenious. What do you think of turning, in wood and ivory, and such things?"

"But he would require to be taught such a trade," said Augusta. "Willy has not much inventive talent."

"Well, I think I have fixed upon a plan," said Lyle, after a pause: "I know a man who followed that trade once himself, and is capable of teaching it to another."

"Who is that?" asked Augusta.

"I will ask Bertram to do it," said Lyle.

"Bertram?" exclaimed Augusta, making no disguise of the



surprise she felt at Henry's proposal ; " he will never do you a favour ; you will get only a rude answer for your trouble, Henry : I would not try him."

" I think not," said Lyle, musingly. " I have for some time past desired an opportunity of trying whether Bertram might not be moulded to less surly stuff than at present composes him. I should like him to feel that I am under an obligation to him, as I find that placing him under one to me does not affect him kindly."

Augusta laughed and shook her head ; but she was aware that her husband was firm in such determinations, especially when the resolution involved a study of human nature ; and Lyle lost no time in calling upon Bertram, whom, as usual, he found alone, and, as usual, doing nothing.

Henry Lyle, after wishing him good morning, opened at once upon the desired subject.

" Bertram," said he, " I have heard that you once worked as a turner. Do you never so employ yourself now ?"

" Never," said the man ; " I have none belonging to me, and none for whom to work."

" Have you forgotten your trade ?" asked Lyle.

" A trade once learnt is learnt, I suppose," said Bertram.

Here was a silence, and the man relapsed into his usual state of apathy.

" Bertram," said Henry Lyle, suddenly, feeling that delay was dangerous, and that he might as well risk his chance of success in a single word as not with so unpromising a subject — " will you do me a kindness ?"

The man looked up towards Lyle with unfeigned surprise,



but no notice was taken by the latter of the evident feeling. He repeated his request,

“Will you do me a kindness? You have it in your power.”

“I!” answered the man, but not rudely or surlily. “When have I ever had it in my power to oblige another for years past? Things were different, perhaps, once; but who ever comes to me and says, ‘Bertram, do me a kindness?’”

“I come to you now, and say, ‘Bertram, do me a kindness,’” answered Lyle, in his peculiarly gentle voice; “and I feel confident that you will not refuse to oblige me.”

The man changed his position, and looked at the wall, but he made no objection in words. Lyle waited for him to speak, and meanwhile sat down upon the box by the wall. There was a long silence, broken only by Bertram occasionally changing his attitude. At length he said,

“And what is it, Mr. Lyle?”

“There is a youth of my acquaintance,” said Henry, “and of yours also, I believe; Willy Benson.”

“A natural,” said Bertram: “well!”

“He might be taught a mechanical trade, such as turning, might he not?” Lyle asked.

“Perhaps so: but the tools are expensive at the first start.”

“I will provide him with the tools and all necessaries for setting him going, but I cannot teach him the trade. You will do this much for me, will you not, Bertram?” concluded Henry Lyle, making no apology for the extent of the favour he was asking of the man, being aware that wordy courtesies would be looked upon with suspicion by his companion.



"I will, sir," said Bertram; and Lyle held out his hand to him, without a word, and shook his hand cordially.

"And now, may I ask you why you ever thought of requesting a favour of me?" asked Bertram, after a little more had passed on the subject of young Benson; "there are not many—indeed, I doubt if there is another man besides yourself who would have asked me to do him a service. I am too surly and too ill-tempered a fellow even to be spoken to civilly."

"You have not shown yourself so," said Lyle, "in this instance at least; and you see, I have had a better knowledge of you than others, who have imagined you to be as rough as your words would imply."

"Mr. Lyle," said Bertram, gravely, "there have been things in my life which might make a man rough and ill-tempered; but ill-temper is never best overcome by its like. It has sometimes seemed to me, as I have sat here alone, with never a soul saying a kind word to me (excepting, of late, yourself,) that I might have been less surly if all the world had not called me a surly fellow. They began to do so before I was quite one, and they made me one amongst them."

This was a longer speech than Henry Lyle had ever heard Bertram make; and as he was aware that he was generally a man of few words, he gave him no superfluous thanks for his ready acquiescence in his request, beyond even Lyle's own expectation. The subject of Willy Benson's initiation into Bertram's trade was talked over more fully; and, having made arrangements with him for the first start, Lyle wished him good-by, and left him.



## CHAPTER XXXIII.

BERTRAM did his part faithfully, and showed himself a clever workman at his trade. Lyle proposed that Willy Benson should live in the spare-room, which was unlet, in Bertram's cottage; and the man answered, "As you will, Mr. Lyle."

Young Benson's mother, the female logician, was at first somewhat averse to the connection formed between her son and the old man, who had been looked upon as a species of ogre by the people of the neighbourhood, and she more than once entered a protest against the arrangement, in her own clear and succinct style of argument; but the lad Benson had become attached to the Lyles, and was anxious to show himself capable of acting as a man, instead of a helpless child; the which, had his mother had her own way, she would have kept him all his life.

Bertram did not, however, gain any more ground with his



neighbours : he was still looked upon with suspicion and distrust ; but to these he was callously indifferent.

“ A set of ignorant fools ! ” said he one day upon re-entering his room, after having been employed in fetching from the court hard by the water which he required for household uses. The remark had been addressed to himself alone, but upon gaining his own room he perceived that he had had a hearer.

“ So they are, Mr. Lyle,” repeated he, addressing himself to Henry, who had, during his absence, entered the cottage, and was awaiting his return ; “ I have not been used, all my life, to associating with such, and I cannot bring myself to it now. Let them leave me alone.”

“ Bertram,” said Lyle, “ I have always known by your speech, and by remarks which you have occasionally made, that you have not always been as you now are. Will you tell me from whence you came ? ”

“ Guernsey,” answered the man, shortly ; but as he said the word, Henry Lyle perceived a dark cloud pass over his brow, and he forbore, therefore, to press the subject : yet presently, Bertram resumed of his own accord :

“ I am an old man now, Mr. Lyle ; older than you think, to look at me ; and I have seen many things during my life which it were best, maybe, to forget. Let bygones be bygones, they can never be mended now ; but they have made me the man I am. I was not always at war with all the world.”

“ Nor are you now, Bertram,” said Lyle ; “ no man can be.”

“ Something not unlike it,” said the man, in answer ; “ but never mind that, Mr. Lyle ; they never made me bend by ill-



treatment, never yet ; and they never shall," said he fiercely, and striking his hand upon the table. "The times have been when I have not had a morsel of bread, and did not know where to turn to get it ; but no one knew it ; I would have starved first."

"And yet," observed Lyle, "you were not right, my dear fellow."

The man started at the unused familiar address, and turned his eyes on Lyle, who went on uninterruptedly :

"Independence of spirit is praiseworthy ; but I fear that there is more of pride than any other feeling in such conduct as you speak of."

"You are right : there is," said Bertram.

"And you would have been guilty had you starved for want of acknowledging your poverty."

"Who could I have asked ?" demanded the man ; "who would have given me anything but insult in return ?"

"Was there none you might have asked without shame ?" said Lyle. "Are there no benevolent, kind-hearted people in the world, who would have assisted instead of insulting you ?"

"No, none," replied Bertram— "I knew none such. I have seen most of the evil side of the world, and have not stopped to look for the good." He added, presently, "I would have asked you, Mr. Lyle ; I would not mind taking anything of you, because——" He turned away his head, and studiously arranged some articles upon the table.

Lyle moved towards the door, but Bertram followed him.

"You are the only man for many years," said he, "who



seemed to think me capable of acting otherwise than like a brute ; and therefore, I have been a brute towards all whom I came near ; and you are the only man, for longer than I care to recollect, who has thought it worth his while to hold out his hand to me. We get into adopting those qualities which are imputed to us, Mr. Lyle."

"We must get rid of them again when we find out our mistake," said Henry, smiling ; "they must be of the bygones."

Bertram often alluded after this to days long past, with a nervous fancy for almost touching upon subjects which he knew would give him pain were they dwelt upon ; and more than once, Henry Lyle anticipated that the man was going to recount some of the incidents of his former life, in the new-born confidence which Lyle's friendly conduct towards him had inspired : but he never went further than allusions merely. On one such occasion, Lyle remarked in answer to a speech on the part of his companion,

"You must have had an eventful life, Bertram, and I should think an interesting one."

The man looked quickly towards Lyle, as if to see if any feeling akin to idle curiosity prompted the observation ; but his suspicious expression passed away as he looked at Henry, and he answered quietly,

"Yes, Mr. Lyle, mine has been, as you say, an eventful life, perhaps an interesting one ; but do not ask me any questions about it. I have seen many changes : I have been a soldier, a traveller, and at one time," added he, smiling grimly, "what some would call *almost a gentleman* ; that is, I have been a



well-to-do man ; and through all, I have been at enmity with mankind. I have not been well used by the world, Mr. Lyle, and perhaps I have not used the world civilly in return. I know what you will say," he added, as he saw the face of Henry Lyle change in expression ; " It sometimes seems odd to me that you, so young a man compared to myself, should be so much further right than I am. I dare say, if the truth were known, I may be old enough to be your grandfather : and yet I have lived all these years in the world, and am still a fool, unknowing to the end what is the right. You will say it is my own fault ; and so it is ; but that does not take away from the unpleasantness of the fact, does it ? Don't ever ask me of my past life, Mr. Lyle. If another man alluded to it, I would turn him out of my house here : and I would rather you should not."

" I never will, Bertram ; rest satisfied of that," said Lyle. " I should consider it an impertinence to inquire into facts which you may wish to pass unnoticed. As you have said, let bygones be bygones, except in the experience which they have given us."

So Henry Lyle never learned Bertram's previous history.



## CHAPTER XXXIV.

“My dear Augusta, will you come and dine with us this evening, and bring that charming husband of yours with you? We have some delightful creatures coming. You must not mind the abruptness of the invitation; you are both so amiable, I know you will not. Now, mind! I take no refusal; come you must, and Mr. Lyle also.

Miss Delaville paused to breathe, and Augusta turned to her husband, saying, laughingly,

“Can you go, you charming man?”

“Of course he can,” rejoined Miss Delaville, who had recovered from her exhaustion, “and of course he will; in fact, we cannot do without him; it is an age since you have been near us. That delightful Mr. Vere has returned to town, and he will be with us; there’s an inducement! Now, good-by, good-by; I am in a fearful hurry. Seven o’clock, you remember.”



The lady flew out of the room, followed by Lyle, but the next moment flitted back again.

"I shall ask Mrs. Seymour to come to us also, I know you will like to see her."

"Very much indeed," answered Augusta; "you are extremely kind."

"Mind you make yourself look very nice; but I am keeping you from going out; you have your bonnet on: how very thoughtless of me!"

"No, indeed," Augusta replied, "we have just come in from walking, and I was about to take off my bonnet when you entered."

"And where have you been, may I ask?" said Miss Delaville. "Come, confess."

"We have been visiting some poor acquaintances of ours," said Augusta, with a slight blush, of which she was the next moment ashamed, at the anticipated surprise of Miss Delaville.

"Poor acquaintances!" echoed that lady; what poor acquaintances can you have?"

"Poor people, then," said Augusta.

"Beggars, do you mean?"

"Yes, beggars, some of them."

Miss Delaville made no effort to conceal her surprise.

"You do not mean," said she, "that you and Mr. Lyle go yourselves into such places? How dreadful! Fancy being mixed up with sickness, and poverty, and vulgarity!"

"It is very dreadful," answered Augusta, "to be, as you say, mixed up with such sickness and poverty; yet we are not the



less mixed up with it, I fancy, by shutting our eyes to its existence."

"But, surely, my dear Augusta," exclaimed Miss Delaville, "you do not mean to say you think it incumbent upon you to inquire into the domestic economy of every vagrant you may chance to meet with?"

"Ask Henry," said Augusta, smiling; "he knows I think as he thinks, and he can better put the thoughts into words than I can—in what degree such acts are incumbent upon us."

"Oh, I cannot venture to ask Mr. Lyle," returned the lady, with a would-be pretty assumption of timidity; "I am afraid of him, quite; he is so very uncompromising and particular." But yet, turning towards Henry immediately afterwards, she said, "Surely you do not think, Mr. Lyle, that it can be right for Augusta to go to all sorts of horrid sinks of iniquity and dens such as are described—such as we read of in the newspapers?"

"No, I should not think it right that Augusta should go into sinks of iniquity and dens," replied Henry, unable to restrain his sarcastic inclination for the moment. "I should not think of placing my wife in any situation which would be shocking to modesty or to propriety; but mere poverty and sorrow, Miss Delaville, are not, in my opinion, shocking either to the one or the other. There are cases where the influence of a woman, and the sympathy of a woman only, can be introduced: in all cases you are better agents than we amongst the poor. Augusta can herself tell you, that she has known scenes where the rougher efforts at comfort of a man seem like cruelty. Your



sex is made for seasons of sorrow, Miss Delaville ; we are too rude at times, when we mean most kindly."

Miss Delaville laughed and looked pleased, but as a fresh objection rose to her mind, she said,

"Still, Mr. Lyle, it has always seemed to me that it is scarcely the province of ladies and gentlemen to see after such things."

"Whose province is it, then, my dear madam ? I am afraid, were we to wait to find out whose duty it strictly may be, we should have the objects dying while the subject was discussed. It is, in my opinion, the province of every human being to take care of his fellow-creature as far as the opportunities are given him. I doubt if the plea will be hereafter considered sufficient, 'I was a gentleman, and therefore could not be expected to interest myself personally and practically in the welfare of others.' Perhaps such an answer as this might be given : 'You were a man, and they were your fellow-men whom you neglected.'"

Miss Delaville looked shocked, as if Henry Lyle had said something very objectionable, indeed almost profane, certainly unlike what most people were in the habit of saying. She paused in replying for a few seconds, and then said,

"You are a very odd man, and really say the most extraordinary things ; you have such unaccountable ideas, and take such a severe view of every-day life. I never could understand you ; but still, I do not believe you mean all you say. I do you the justice to think that."

"The injustice, you should have said," returned Lyle ; "think



me a fool if you will, in preference to thinking me a knave."

Miss Delaville laughed again, and answered archly,

"You and Mr. Vere are very hard puzzles. I suppose, for the same reason, you are both geniuses; and, really, geniuses are such very odd creatures! Now, Mr. Vere comes sometimes and talks for half an hour, and after he is gone we find that there has not been a word of truth in all he has said."

"That is a great oddity, certainly," said Henry, laughing; "I hope my singularity is not of the same order."

"Oh, I cannot make you out. There, there, leave off speaking," said Miss Delaville; "you are a charming Don Quixote, and Augusta a delightful enthusiast. Mind you come this evening. My goodness! how the time goes. No, do not trouble yourself, Mr. Lyle; I can find my way down alone. Good-by."

And the lady flew once more past Lyle, down the staircase, and was out of the house before he could follow her, having forgotten for the last hour that she had been in "a fearful hurry."

And having also entirely forgotten the communication which she had formerly made to Augusta relative to Mr. Vere, which now recurred to Augusta's mind, reviving all her feelings of annoyance at meeting him. Lyle noticed the silence which followed the departure of Miss Delaville, and inquired the reason of it, and for a moment Augusta was on the point of telling him; but the old argument prevailed, and she determined to keep the fact still to herself, and leave him in ignorance of the evil; and in order so to do, to treat Mr. Vere as always.



## CHAPTER XXXV.

LYLE and Augusta dined that evening at Mrs. Delaville's house, and, as they had been led to expect, met Mr. Vere, besides his mother, Mrs. Seymour, several other ladies, and half a dozen men, all coat-tails and whiskers, amongst whom was young B——, whom we have previously mentioned.

During the evening, Miss Delaville, ever ready to show her acuteness by taking her acquaintances to task, renewed the subject of discussion which had interested her in the morning, and attacked Mr. and Mrs. Lyle upon their chivalric interest in the poor around them.

“Of course, it is very right and very creditable,” screamed the lady. “I would be the last, I am sure, to object to such self-devotion; but what I say is this, where are you to stop? It seems quite trifling to be assisting half a dozen, or perhaps more families, when really one reads such dreadful accounts of the poverty of the whole population, that anything we might



do would be a mere drop in the ocean. I suppose, now," she continued, turning towards Henry Lyle, "that you will differ from me, as usual, and bring some unanswerable argument against me."

"I am sorry you should think I usually differ from you, Miss Delaville," said he.

"Do you not, though? Come, never mind; I knew you could not outwardly agree when you differ in principle, and no doubt I am generally wrong. You and I think so very contrary, and are so very unlike in many things."

Miss Delaville spoke truly, although she scarcely intended what she said; yet she did not pause to think which of the two was in the right, and which in error.

"You do not expect to regenerate the world, do you, Mr. Lyle?" asked she.

"Miss Delaville," asked Henry Lyle, "did you ever hear of a man named John Newton?"

"Why, yes, I think I have; but I forget what he was: a clergyman, or something, was he not?"

"*Something*, at any rate," answered Lyle. "This man once said that he looked upon society as composed of two great heaps, the one of happiness, the other of misery; 'and if,' to use his own words as far as I can recollect them, 'I can but take a few grains from the latter heap, and add to them to the former, so as to increase its bulk, I have not lived utterly in vain. If I meet a child crying for the loss of a halfpenny, and by giving it another I could stop its tears, I have done something.' Is not that a noble sentiment with which to travel



through life, Miss Delaville? Is it not a sentiment worth the adoption of us all? If we every one strove to remove but a few grains from the heap of misery during our lifetime, how much the mound would daily decrease! But we look at the entire wretched erection, and it appears to us, as it is, beyond our labours; and we forget that it is composed of but grains, some of them very light."

"Well, you are a good man, and I admire you very much, I do really," said Miss Delaville; and she moved away to talk to another of her guests, and equally admired all that was next said.

The question was started, originated we know not where, of what constituted happiness on earth.

"Oh yes; now, pray, everybody give his opinion: that will be delightful," exclaimed Miss Delaville. "We shall have such original ideas from some of you! Who shall begin? Sir William, you come first. Now, what is your idea of sublunary bliss?"

"A good dinner," said Sir William S——, making round eyes.

"How extremely droll! you greedy man!" returned the lady; but we must be serious. We are not joking, you know; every one must tell his real opinion."

"Commence yourself, then, young lady," said Sir William, gallantly.

"I? Oh, what shall I say?" and Miss Delaville thought for a moment. "Well, I think such an assembly as the present. Now, Sir William, it is really your turn."



"I am a Mede and a Persian ; still I say, a good dinner."

"You are an alderman, rather. Now, Mr. B——," turning to the young author.

"Fame, public approval," said he gravely.

"Now, is not that like him ?" cried Miss Delaville ; "and I am sure it is a very noble idea. Augusta, your turn."

"Home," said Augusta.

"Ridiculous child ! And Mr. Valentine Leigh, what do you say ?"

"I have never decided, madam, what is true happiness," answered Valentine ; "but I think having plenty of money is as good a style as any, to my mind."

"So it is," answered Miss Delaville ; and several others laughed, and said, "So it is."

"Mrs. Vere," resumed Miss Delaville, after a pause, "tell us your idea of what is happiness."

Mrs. Vere glanced towards her son, and was about to answer, when Miss Delaville, rightly interpreting her thoughts, although not forestalling what she was going to say, exclaimed,

"Your look is sufficient, my dear Mrs. Vere ; your idea is charming, although not put into words ; I am sure Mr. Arthur Vere ought to be proud. And now, Mr. Harding, it comes to your turn."

"Mr. Clough Harding, who had contrived to push himself into the Delavilles, acquaintance, as he did on most occasions, answered shortly,

"Pipes and beer."

"Ha ! ha ! ha !" laughed Miss Delaville, "how very amus-



ing you are;" and in the supposed wit of the speech, the vulgarity of the sentiment was overlooked. "Mr. Harding, I have always said you are quite an original. Now, Mr. Lyle, I have been impatiently waiting that it should come to your turn; what say you?"

"Do you wish for my real opinion?" asked Henry, "or are we only in play?"

"In play? Of course not. Each sentiment stamps the character of the speaker. Now, be careful."

Henry Lyle coloured a little as he answered, for there was a dead silence,

"You know what I think; the endeavour to make the happiness of others."

Vere slightly sneered, but the change in his face was not observed, and young B—— exclaimed,

"You are right, Mr. Lyle; and you have, without intending it, rebuked very many of us for our selfish sentiments; you have given the best exemplification yet." And moving towards Lyle, young B—— took a seat beside him, and the two entered into conversation together, for B—— was a man injured but not spoiled by society, and had in him the dawnings of noble things.

"We have not yet finished, though, ladies and gentlemen," said Miss Delaville, returning to the charge.

"I think we have had enough, have we not?" said Vere; "the last answer seems to have given entire satisfaction."

"No, not until you have answered also," replied the lady; "I want intensely to hear what you will say. Come, Mr.



Vere, be so obliging as to tell me what is your conception of earthly happiness?"

Almost without his own consent, Vere, in answer, muttered between his teeth,

"Oblivion!"

The general attention of the audience was turned from Vere, by some remarks by Mr. B—— upon a clever caricature which was lying upon the table. A group soon collected round the author, and Miss Delaville flew off to the new scene of action, to add her share to the noise and excitement. Mr. Vere was appealed to, and the drawing shown to him. His features relaxed so far as to form a very becoming smile, but he indulged in no noisy merriment, like the others.

The ladies laughed aloud, reckless of the injunctions of the "rules of politeness;" and Mr. B——, the originator of the fun, joined heartily in the laughter, having the good taste to suppose that his hearers were not more easily amused than himself, and making no superhuman endeavours to control his own risible muscles.

Vere's lip curled insensibly as he listened to the shouts of amusement, and perhaps he mentally commented on the folly of humanity.

"What is it?" asked Henry Lyle, looking from one to the other of the faces, all lighted up, and ready to go off again at the least encouragement. His own features caught the infection, and it was with some difficulty that he asked the question gravely.

One of the men repeated the witticism of Mr. B——, and



Henry Lyle flushed crimson to the temples, preparatory to falling into convulsions.

“Don’t speak to me!” said he, as the gentleman before mentioned, seeing him nearly stifled with laughter, good-naturedly alluded again to the subject of mirth, touching it up and improving it—“don’t speak to me, you’ll kill me.”

Mr. Vere looked at Lyle, as he bent over the table, feigning to examine some very common-place illustrations in order to hide his face, but shaking all the time with laughter, with real surprise.

“I never knew a fellow more easily amused than Lyle,” observed Mr. B——; “he laughs like a child at a joke.”

“Very easily amused,” Vere answered; and he mused upon his own words, as he was in the habit of doing.

It was years, many years since Vere remembered to have laughed so lightly—ever since he had become a man; and why was it that Henry Lyle, of the same age as himself, an intellectual man also, not one of the “crowd of fools,” as Vere would style them, still retained this childish propensity?

That night, going through the passage-gallery which led to his sleeping-room, the light which Arthur Vere carried fell upon a painting which hung against the wall. It was one which Mrs. Vere loved to look upon, which she would have had placed in her own apartment, had not its size prevented her doing so, its place being filled by a portrait of her son since he had become a man.

This also was his portrait, but taken at a very early age; an infant of two or three years old, almost unclothed, excepting



by a little shirt; utterly careless, unconscious of observation and innocent.

Arthur Vere was alone, and he sighed. He recollected the observation of Mr. B——, the happy laughter of Lyle, and the long train of reflections which at the time they had induced; and he muttered to himself, half aloud, "Folly!" yet he knew, and felt, he was telling himself a lie. It was one of Arthur Vere's better frame of mind, and he allowed the regret, which at other times he would drive away, to steal over his heart, as he looked at the picture of his infant self. It smiled at him reproachfully from the canvas, reminding him vividly of the time when feelings had been with him which latterly he had not chosen to know.

Arthur Vere had not been brought up as many children are, from their earliest infancy learning the lessons of truth and wisdom: his first impressions were not of bent knees and clasped hands; but they were still of innocent thoughts and aspirations. He remembered vividly, acutely, the many seasons of inward warfare which he had experienced, before he had succeeded in shaking off the tenderness of conscience and desire for better things which had influenced him then, and which shone out in the sweet countenance of childhood.

It was a lovely child, the one here represented; the large, clear, dark eyes looking honestly upward; the beautiful features and clustering hair. There were still in the living representative the faultless features, still the curling locks over the forehead; but the sweet expression was gone, worn out. Vere's



smile was now a studied one ; his thoughtful mood was mournful, his general expression fixed and stern.

"It is very like you still, dear Arthur," said a voice close to him : his mother was, and had been for some moments past, standing by his side.

"Like me !" he exclaimed ; "*that* like me ! That is the image of an innocent child. It is not like me."

Mrs. Vere looked surprisedly at her son.

"It was always considered very like, my dearest," said she, gazing admiringly at him. "You are handsomer as a man than you were as a child ; but still you are very like."

"Handsomer !" echoed he, impatiently, speaking to himself and not to her, although she had laid her hand fondly on his arm, and was looking up into his face. "That child is innocent : *can I* ever have been like that ?"

"My dearest boy," exclaimed Mrs. Vere, affectionately, "are not you well ?" She took his hand and kissed it, but he withdrew it impatiently from her.

"Was I ever like that child ?" he asked, looking quickly round at her.

"Exactly," she answered, without understanding the feeling which prompted the question, and taking his hand again in hers, not in the least rebuffed by his indifference and rudeness. "Exactly, my darling. Oh, what a sweet child you were ! You were the most beautiful boy in the neighbourhood, my Arthur."

He did not hear all this which she had said, but continued gazing at the picture.



Soon Mrs. Vere was terribly alarmed by Arthur pressing both his hands over his brow, and groaning aloud, as if in pain. She would have called for help, but she remembered that all were in bed excepting themselves. She turned very pale, and watched him anxiously, afraid to ask him any questions, for Mrs. Vere stood greatly in awe of the son she so doted upon.

"Let that thing be removed," said he, frowningly, pointing at the picture. "Put it anywhere you choose, but do not let it stare at me."

Mrs. Vere would have remonstrated, had she dared, and would have asked what reason there was for such a demand; as it was, she only acquiesced, with,

"Certainly, dear Arthur; as you wish." And the next morning the painting was carried out of the passage into an unused room.

It was, and had been, ever thus. The movements of good were always put away. The old struggle of early years had revived this night, and again, as before, evil had triumphed over good. Once more the memory of innocence had been rejected, when it strove to argue with the better impulses of his heart. Arthur Vere turned his back upon the picture, a worse, because not a better, man than before.



## CHAPTER XXXVI.

NEVER by any relaxation in work, never by any murmur or complaint on his part, did Henry Lyle evince it, yet from the affectionate solicitude of Augusta he could not conceal that he was ill. It came upon him very gradually, and was fought with and struggled against for many months; but still there was no warding it off successfully. Sickness would be felt, and be attended to.

To Augusta's repeated inquiries Lyle always answered the same: It would pass off, it was nothing serious; he was, perhaps fatigued; he would now recreate himself, and all would be right: and Augusta fondly believed all that her husband told her, because she dared not, for her own peace, discredit it. Yet, one morning, all these hopes were put to flight, and Lyle's illness undoubtedly confirmed by his deluging the room with blood, as he walked with more than usual haste towards the window. He did not speak a word, but turned



anxiously towards Augusta, fearing the effects which the catastrophe might have upon her. She had become ghastly pale as she saw the blood stream from her husband's mouth ; but she gave no scream of horror or surprise. She took his hand, and made him sit down, while he struggled with the faintness which he felt coming over him, and tried to smile at her.

"You must be very careful of him, young lady. You must not allow him to use any exertion, or to undergo any excitement ; and we shall be all right before long."

"You do not think him in danger, then ?" exclaimed Augusta, in her agitation seizing the hand of the doctor with no very gentle grasp.

"In danger ? no, not in immediate danger. If you are careful, there is nothing to be apprehended, my dear Mrs. Lyle," said the doctor, kindly patting her hand. "Do not agitate yourself ; these accidents will happen ; but Mr. Lyle will soon be quite strong again, and well. The lungs are not materially injured."

The words, "Do not agitate yourself," were unfortunately spoken. Augusta could bear much : she was a true woman, therefore a true heroine ; but the compassionate sympathy of the kind old doctor, expressed both in words and actions, overcame her, and hiding her face in the sofa-cushion, she, for the first time in her life, went fairly into hysterics. Had she been told that Henry Lyle was ill past recovery, she would have bowed her head and borne it in silence ; but not that there was no danger, that he would soon be all right.



The doctor took her hand in his, and raising her from the sofa, said, in a stern voice,

“Mrs. Lyle! My dear young lady, this is foolish and weak, and unlike yourself; and, moreover, you are taking the very course which I have forbidden. You will agitate and disturb your husband.”

It was not necessary to speak a second time to Augusta after such an argument as the concluding. She rose from the sofa, wiped the tears from her eyes, and tried to check the sobs which still would come at intervals.

Be very careful of him, remember; but such a caution, I think, it is scarcely necessary to give to you. Do not let him work at his easel, nor exert himself in any way.”

Augusta strictly carried out the injunctions of the physician. The painting remained unfinished, notwithstanding Lyle's repeated asseverations that he was strong enough to work.

Yet day after day the doctor's bill lengthened, and the little fund which they had been able to save, decreased. Augusta became alarmed, as her husband, in spite of his declarations of strength, remained still incapable of movement or exertion; and the doctor daily reiterated his cautions, even against too much speaking on Lyle's part.

The payment of Valentine's debts had left Lyle without any resources but his own work; he had started afresh from that moment.

“Gussy,” said Lyle, one day, after he had been thinking for some time in silence, “it is very unfortunate that I should



have fallen ill just at present, for we cannot so well afford it. I fear Dr. ——'s bill will be a very long one."

"Do not think of that now, Harry," said she, wishing to dismiss from his mind a subject which was ever present to her own.

"It must be thought of, Augusta. I wish Dr. —— would allow me to go out, I would call upon Mr. Grant, and ask him to assist me. I must borrow money, although it is very much against my inclination."

"Cannot I go?" she asked.

"It is an unpleasant errand, Gussy. You would not like it."

"I will go if you will allow me, Henry;" and taking for granted the permission, Augusta put on her bonnet and walked to Mr. Grant's.

That gentleman received her with his usual kindness, but from the first moment of their interview she could perceive that there was something wrong. Mr. Grant was fidgety and ill at ease. He inquired minutely and with interest after Henry, and was much concerned to hear that he was still suffering; and Augusta was still hesitating how to introduce the object of her visit, when Mr. Grant asked her if she had lately seen her brother Valentine.

"Not for some days; indeed, not for a week. Valentine does not come often to see us: he is always so much occupied, and I fancy he does not find much amusement with us, particularly since Henry has been ill."

"Better for him, perhaps, if he went oftener. I am sorry



to say, my dear Mrs. Lyle, that your brother has not gone on at all well of late."

Augusta felt alarmed, and she inquired hastily, "I hope he does not neglect his duties to you?"

"I doubt," replied the old gentleman, "if he has any sense of his duty to me or anybody else. Excuse my speaking so freely, my dear Mrs. Lyle. I am sorry to have to do so to his sister. I have not seen Leigh for a week past; he has sent excuses very often lately, making a plea of illness, when I have afterwards found it to be but a plea of idleness or dissipation. I regret that he has not at all acted up to the promises with which he commenced with me."

"I am very sorry to hear it," said Augusta, feeling a strong disposition to cry—"very sorry, indeed."

"It is no fault of yours, my dear lady; but I am myself very sorry that he has turned out so badly, especially after having been, as it were, guaranteed to me by Henry Lyle."

"Valentine promised so repeatedly to behave steadily," said Augusta.

"I know he did, and therefore he has the more shame that he broke his promise. His conduct has been a source of great annoyance and inconvenience to me, I can assure you. I cannot help wishing I had never seen him, for he has got his department of the business into a nice mess, which will put me to great expense to get right again; besides the confusion into which everything is thrown, by the uncertainty I have been in as to supplying his place."



Augusta felt stunned by this blow, and all thought of carrying out the purpose of her visit to Mr. Grant was abandoned.

"I am sorry to be obliged to take such a course," resumed Mr. Grant, after a pause; "but I have borne very long with Leigh—longer than I would have done with any other person in my employ—out of regard to Henry, and I cannot, if only in justice to others, overlook his conduct any longer. It is painful to me to be obliged to say so much to his sister, but it is necessary, in order that you and Lyle may exonerate me with regard to your brother. I fear very much that Leigh has contracted some unfortunate intimacies."

Augusta tried to bear all this patiently, and she did so; but the tears fell fast from her eyes as she left Mr. Grant's house, with her office unfulfilled, and hurried towards her own home.

"You were quite right, Gussy," said Lyle, after having listened to her recital of what Mr. Grant had said—"quite right, dear. You could not in common decency have asked for his assistance after having heard all this; it would be too much to expect Mr. Grant to help us now. It is unfortunate that that avenue of hope is closed, but we must try to think of something else. I am distressed about Valentine; I had hoped better things of him."

How distressed Lyle did not say; he strove to turn the conversation to other things, and spoke hopefully; but as he wiped his mouth throughout the day, Augusta's heart ached to see the handkerchief was stained with blood.



## CHAPTER XXXVII.

To find Valentine was the next step, and discover how far his rebellion had gone : but this was a difficult matter. Naturally, he was shy of coming to Lyle's house, knowing that he had broken his word to him and forfeited his honour. Yet Augusta was unremitting in her endeavours to meet her brother, and after two or three days she succeeded in doing so. Mrs. Seymour informed her that she expected Valentine would call one afternoon, and Augusta, without allowing her brother to be told of her intention, met him at the house of their mutual friend.

Valentine started, blushed, and looked uncomfortable when he saw his sister enter shortly after he had arrived ; and to Augusta's,

“ Why, Val ! what have you been doing lately ?—why do you never come and see us now ? ” he stammered some unintelligible answer.



"It is unkind in you," continued Augusta, "for Henry has been so very ill, and I so anxious for him."

"Oh, I should only have been in the way, you know, Gussy," said Valentine, awkwardly. "I felt that, and thought I had better keep away."

"Was that your reason for avoiding coming to us?" asked Augusta, looking at him fully. "It was scarcely a kind one: but there was another reason, I believe, Valentine, which, I confess, is more allowable than the one you have given, though no less to your discredit."

"What on earth do you mean, Augusta?" said the young man, looking at his sister with an assumed boldness in his eyes.

"You need scarcely ask the question, Valentine. Mr. Grant has told me of your late conduct."

"Mr. Grant!" interrupted Valentine. "What right has Mr. Grant——"

"Every right, I should think, considering it his business you have neglected, and his money you have wasted, or rather omitted to improve. Every right, in that you have insulted him by breaking your word with him."

"Come, come, that's quite enough," said Valentine, gloomily. "I don't see what affair it is of yours to take me to task for what I have done, or not done. It is not your business, Augusta."

"Your interests must always be mine, Valentine, whether you will or no. You are wrong, as well as unkind, in refusing my interference. I very much fear that you have become



intimate again with Mr. Harding, by the unfortunate change for the worse which you show."

"No, indeed," answered Valentine, sharply; "I do not mean to have anything further to do with Clough Harding: he played me a shabby trick before, and, as Vere says, he is a vulgar-minded fellow."

"Vere!" exclaimed Augusta. "How came you acquainted with Mr. Vere?"

"Well, Miss Augusta, I suppose I may be acquainted with Vere as well as you. He is a capital good fellow—the best fellow in the world."

"The very words you used, I remember, with regard to Mr. Clough Harding, some time ago; and you know what kind of a capital fellow he proved."

"Clough Harding!" said Valentine, contemptuously. "Vere is a man of talent and genius, and a perfect gentleman; I am under obligations to him, and am proud of having him for a friend."

"Valentine," said Augusta, sadly, "I am afraid, if I say what I think, that I shall again offend you; yet, at the risk of doing so, I must warn you against Mr. Vere. A man of talent and genius he is, but I have known him longer than you have: are you aware that he is a man of little principle, and very unsettled in his opinions?"

"Pooh!" said Valentine, rudely, forgetting, after the manner of the school of Mr. Clough Harding, that his sister was a gentlewoman. "I tell you what, I admire Vere in every way. He is a fine, liberal-minded fellow, without any hum-



bug or cant about him. Just the man for the present day."

"And what," asked Augusta, finding that it was useless to combat her brother's opinions, and therefore hopelessly dropping the subject—"and what do you intend doing now?"

"Doing! what on earth can I do?" said he, doggedly.

"That is the question I would ask of you. Have you thought of nothing? You must be aware that all chance of Mr. Grant's taking you on again is at an end. Besides, how could you guarantee your future conduct?"

"I don't want Grant to take me on again. I want no one to guarantee me," said Valentine.

"Do not be ridiculous, Valentine. You must live, I suppose; and what are you to do?"

"I am sure I do not know," said the weak young man, sinking into a chair, and beginning to shed tears. "I don't know what to do. I am so miserable, I feel inclined to hang myself."

"I do not, either, know what you can do, Val. We are ourselves very badly off at present. Henry's illness has been a very expensive one, and I know we cannot assist you."

"Can't you?" asked Valentine, meanly lost to all sense of independence and personal exertion.

"No," said Augusta, decidedly.

"Really, it is very hard upon a man that he cannot get on. What on earth am I to do? Augusta, do try and advise me," said he, turning in his distress to his stronger-minded sister.

"Think for yourself, Valentine. Yet, one thing I would advise you to do before you attempt anything else."



“What is that?”

“Make an apology to Mr. Grant for your rudeness towards, and neglect of him. You owe it.”

“Oh, come, I can’t do that,” said Valentine.

“I shall think the worse of you if you do not. I might advise you also to choose better and more useful associates; but I fear you will not well receive such advice.”

Valentine was completely subdued, and he whined over the state of his affairs in an inane and unmanly way, so that Augusta with some difficulty smothered a feeling of contempt which rose in her bosom against him.

Valentine promised all, promised to strive and procure employment. Fortunately he was not in debt. The next time she heard of him it was by letter, saying that he had gone abroad, and was spending his days very pleasantly, but giving no account whatever of the way in which, or the means by which, he lived.

Augusta and Henry Lyle never saw Mr. Grant again. The kind old man died a few days following the interview mentioned in the last chapter. Henry Lyle received a formal note informing him of the fact, and shortly afterwards an intimation that Mr. Grant had mentioned him in his will.

Like many other kind-hearted men, Mr Grant had been careless and indolent in business; his affairs were found to be in disorder at his death; it was doubtful whether all the legacies could be paid, and there was greater than usual delay in settling things. All this was told to Henry Lyle at large, in order, no doubt, to avoid his demanding his legacy any



earlier than custom dictated : so that vehicle of assistance was entirely closed to them, had Henry Lyle contemplated at some future time applying again to his friend ; yet still his illness went on, and Dr. ——'s claim upon him increased day by day.

Dr. —— became very fussy and uncomfortable, although he did not allow the Lyles to observe he was so ; for the money which Mr. Grant's firm held of his could not be paid upon his demand. It was an unavoidable delay, but it put the doctor to inconvenience, and an inconvenience was always a subject for fuming and fussing with him, and for getting red in the face.

Augusta, in the midst of her anxieties, distressed herself about her brother's conduct, and she sought to influence him to better things by writing to him ; but Valentine was not to be swayed by any written arguments and entreaties. Personally, he might be bent in either direction by the last speaker ; his life had been composed of constant waverings and vacillations, without fixed principle upon any one subject in life ; to-day it was the opinion of this acquaintance, and to-morrow another had contradicted what Valentine at the time had imagined himself to believe. His mind seemed never to advance, for it was allowed no time thoroughly to imbibe an idea before it was displaced by an opposing influence. Valentine Leigh would have made a not unamiable woman, although not a respectable one, for such a character as his would have become but a copy of whatever stronger mind it was placed in contact with. As a man, he was contemptible in the extreme.

Some feeling of shame probably mingled with the averseness



which Valentine evinced to keeping up communication with his sister. He could not but remember the services which Henry Lyle had done him ; perhaps his own asseverations of sincerity and promises of good towards Lyle still rose to his mind. The letters which Augusta wrote him were left unnoticed, and his sister had no means of hearing news of him ; so she learnt at length to satisfy her own mind that all would come right at the last ; that Valentine would some day again meet with a better angel, and would be as easily converted to good as he had been perverted the opposite way.

It was not for some years afterwards that she read of his death in the public paper as taking place at some town on the Continent,—by whom inserted Augusta never knew ; and this, after any affection which might have arisen in her heart towards him during her brief knowledge of her brother, had been worn out. Augusta never knew how Valentine had died, and how, until then, he had lived,—whether in the manners and habits of a Clough Harding, the principles of a Vere, or the practical virtues of a Lyle.



## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"THEN what next was to be done?" thought Augusta, for some effort must be made to avert the prospect of daily want. Henry Lyle continued ill, and the doctor did not cease his attendance, and there were many incidental expenses necessary in a sick house, which must be met in some way.

"I shall try to get employment of some kind, Harry," said Augusta, after one of her long trains of thoughts upon the one subject on her return home.

"My dearest Gussy! what could you do?" he asked.

"What do other women do, who are obliged to work for their own and others' support? What has been done may be done again; I shall ask the advice of Mrs. Seymour, and lose no time in procuring work."

Henry Lyle gave her no answer for a few minutes; when he did so, he drew her to him, and held his arm round her as he said,



"It is reversing things, Gussy, that you should work; I did not lead you to expect this when you married me."

"You led me to expect that we were to suffer together, as well as to rejoice together, Harry,—at least, so I have always anticipated. Why should not I try to work? You have worked for me always. You do not know how proud I should feel if I can succeed in my wishes."

"Dearest Augusta!"

"But Dr. ——'s bill?" continued she: "that is what puzzles me most; I shall never be able to realize a small fortune and pay that off."

"Does Dr. —— know how we are situated?" asked Lyle.

"No; I have never entered into such particulars with him."

"Then tell him, Gussy, the state of the case: he is a kind-hearted, gentlemanly man, and I regret having to ask him to wait, but I never could have anticipated this unfortunate business with Mr. Grant. Tell Dr. —— that as soon as I am able to work I will pay his debt, and meanwhile, I must try to get well as fast as I can, Gussy: it is now a matter of honesty.

Dr. —— would listen to none of Augusta's excuses. He had already suspected how matters were, and kindly insisted that he required no payment for months, or even years; it was all the same to him, but Lyle must not set to work too soon.

He omitted, however, saying that the non-payment was by no means convenient to him at that time. He was a poor man, with a large family, with all the largeness of heart which *poor* gentlemen so eminently possess. He heartily shook the



hand of Augusta, told her to look forward hopefully and take care of her husband, and did not choose to discontinue his visits.

Mrs. Seymour entered with energy into Augusta's plans, and the next few days were spent in seeking for employment, At first, plain work was suggested, but this idea was soon abandoned, and an engagement was entered into with a Berlin and fancy-work establishment; and Augusta felt herself as having acquired fresh importance when, for the first time, she displayed before the eyes of her husband the materials to be made up into specimens of various useless ornaments for the drawing-room.

So, week after week, Henry Lyle lay upon the sofa, and Augusta sat by his side, busy with the pretty nothings which now earned their livelihood.

"How well I remember," said she, one day, looking up from the work and addressing her husband, "mamma laughed at me long ago for expending so much energy upon learning a new stitch. Dear Philip teased me too, about it. In those days, in my heart I also despised such trifling occupations, although I recollect that I would not have acknowledged it to Philip. How little I then thought I should have to bring all my energies to work upon such things as this, and in what a cause!"

He listened to her remarks with his eyes fixed on her face, but gave no answer.

"I could not now look upon this work as trifling; the cause has made it almost sacred to me. Does it ever seem to you



that all the events of our lives are enacted to us many times over again? I do not know exactly how to express myself. Things appear to go round, and bring us always back to the same feelings——My darling Harry!”

For he had turned his face upon the pillow, away from her.

“Mamma told me I was wasting my time,” continued Augusta, talking cheerfully to divert Lyle’s thoughts, and forcibly checking the tears which inopportunately trickled down her face; “but I obstinately insisted upon conquering the difficulty, and dear Philip——”

“Dear Gussy! are you speaking of me at this very moment?” said the well-known voice of Philip Wilson; and simultaneously with the sound her cousin appeared at the door. He was warmly welcomed by both Lyle and Augusta, but the pleasure which had sparkled in Philip’s eyes as he entered, fled as he looked at his friend.

“My dear Lyle, I am so distressed, you can’t think. What made you get ill, you stupid fellow! And I should not have come in suddenly upon you, I believe; I am such an impetuous fool, I am always doing mischief.”

“On the contrary, my dear Philip,” said Henry; “it does me good to see you. Sit down, and tell us all you have been doing, and all you have seen, and how you are. Go on talking, like a dear fellow, and do not wait for me to answer you.”

Philip was a very good hand at talking, and he kept Lyle and Augusta amused for hours that afternoon, recounting all his adventures and his prospects. He had not done much, but he had irons in the fire. His future was promising——nothing



yet realized : and in return, Augusta told of all that had taken place since Philip left, lightly and cheerfully telling even the difficulties of their position, for Lyle's sake, and occasionally, as she did so, glancing towards her husband, to see if anything she said pained him.

Philip Wilson intuitively guessed her caution, and listened without comment to all she told him, joining in her hopes of brighter days, and talking of Lyle's quick recovery.

"But you have had nothing to eat, Philip!" exclaimed Augusta, as there occurred a break in the very animated conversation which had taken place. "What a shame in me not to think of it!" And she left the room for a few minutes.

"You must take what is in the house, Philip," said she, on her return : "there is no time for preparations. Come down stairs with me."

Philip Wilson needed no second bidding. He nodded to Lyle, and quickly followed his cousin ; but it was with thoughts very far off from dinner that he entered the dining-room.

"Oh, Gussy!" exclaimed he, as soon as he found himself alone with her, "it breaks my heart to see things going so badly with you."

"Do you then think that Henry is——?" commenced she, turning very pale.

"No, no, dear ; I did not mean that," said Philip. "God grant that Henry may soon be well again ! No doubt he will be. It was of money matters I would speak."

"Money !" said Augusta, with something of contempt in her



tone; "do not distress yourself, Philip; when Henry is well, all will go right. Dr. —— will wait for payment; and I can manage from day to day, thank God."

Philip sat down, and laid his head upon the table.

"What a fool! what an idle, useless, good-for-nothing nonentity I have been! Of what use have been these hands to me or others? Why was I made a great strong fellow, if I had not been intended to work? I blush at seeing my own muscles, to think how they might have been of service to a more industrious man. Even the little income which I had I have invested in a doubtful speculation, from a disinclination to work my way up slowly but surely. Augusta, at such a time as this, I ought to have been able to step forward to your assistance, and I am useless, utterly useless. Oh! how often my uncle Leigh has told me that labour was as much my heritage as that of other men, and I laughed at the suggestion." Philip covered his face with his hands, and shed tears of honest regret.

"Do not, dear Philip," said Augusta, putting her arm round him; "I know well that you have the will to help us, if you have not the power."

"What is the use of the will only, Gussy? So any fool might say. I ought to have had the power; had I been a *man*, I should have had the power. An idiot, a bedridden man, a child could do no less, than live as I have done."

"Philip, dear, do you know, you distress me very much by your self-reproaches," said Augusta.

"Gussy, I had intended remaining in England for some little



while, idling my time still further, in fact ; but I will not do so ; I shall return at once from whence I came. I will work, I promise you : I swear to you, Augusta, that I will exert every energy I possess to help you on. Will you believe me ?”

“ Implicitly, Philip. I have always believed in your affection, and your truth and honour.”

“ Then God bless you, dear. Tell Lyle I will come and see him to-morrow. Tell him I am in England only for a few days.” And he moved towards the door.

Augusta glanced at the table, the decorum of which had not been in the least disturbed.

“ I could not touch anything, Gussy. Do not ask me,” said Philip. And the next moment he left the house.

Philip’s life was one of continual regrets, but they were honest and well-founded ones. He was acutely alive to his own faults, although he had not always had the energy to correct them, and avoid their consequences ; but where his heart was concerned, he required no stronger inducement to overcome his natural indolence.

Mrs. Seymour became the depository of his impetuous lamentations on this his visit to England. From the Lyles’ house he flew to her, and descanted upon the poverty, as he imagined it, in which he had found his friends ; but upon Mrs. Seymour’s expressing surprise at his words, Philip suddenly remembered that he had been desired by Augusta to refrain from repeating the particulars of their difficulties, for Mrs. Seymour’s heart was much more expanded than her income. (Why is it generally so, that the inclination for good goes with the accession



of fortune? or that the selfish and ungenerous are more frequently given riches? Because they are already selfish; and the simple-hearted might learn to be of their school, were they to acquire wealth. God grant that we may never be rich, if fortune must be an exchange for generous feelings!) And Lyle still hoped personally to set himself right before long. He required but time, he had said, and Philip respected the feeling, the old feeling of independence, which made his cousin recoil from unnecessarily asking assistance.

"But you intend to be rich some day, Philip," said Mrs. Seymour, consolingly, "and then you can assist Augusta; but I do not think, my dear, she is to be pitied for having to exert herself. I had once to work: indeed, Augusta seems to like it, and it is better for her than brooding over Henry's illness: she might begin to fancy he is dying. I have offered her all I could offer, but Gussy refused it."

"God bless you!" said Philip. "I am always intending, and never realizing. Oh, I wish I were not such an idle fellow!"

Mrs. Seymour smiled.

"Don't laugh at me, dear Mrs. Seymour," said he; "it is not now merely an idle wish, as it has been for my life through. You shall see if it is. I have learnt practically to-day the necessity for exertion. By experience! Can we be taught only by experience—and it such a painful way of learning? It seems to me as if everything in life is learnt just a little too late: after all the mischief is done we grow wise, and determine to do better, when there is no work left for us.



Is there no other effectual way of learning than by experience?"

"Moralizing again, Phil! Don't begin that, my dear, or we shall have no work done," answered Mrs. Seymour, laughingly.

"Don't prophesy evil of me. I will work. I shall leave England at once, again. There is no necessity for my staying here, excepting to waste money." And, as if about instantly to put his purpose in execution, Philip Wilson rose from his seat, kissed Mrs. Seymour, and wished her good-by.

As he had promised, Philip went to the Lyles the following day, to wish them also adieu. As he neared the house his heart beat quickly, and the blood flowed tumultuously through his veins. He hurried over his parting, and left them, promising to write before long. As he walked furiously down the street, after the door had closed upon him, he raised his hat from his brows, for the weight of it seemed to oppress him, and inwardly agreed with his own mind that it was better for him to be out of England; and, like a brave man, he crushed without delay the thoughts and wishes which the late meeting with his cousin had revived.

Thoughts and wishes which, allowed to gain ground, would have made Philip Wilson no longer the honest, single-hearted man he was; and yet it can be but little wrong to think and dream over the things which have been, which might have been, had circumstances turned otherwise. So Philip might have argued, as each of us argues to himself, when loth to part with the fancies which he loves, yet doubts of.



Philip Wilson had dearly loved his cousin with all the strength of an upright heart: he loved her still, and strove only for her happiness and good.

Arthur Vere had passionately loved Augusta. He indignantly denied to himself that he still loved her. He sought neither her happiness nor good, and would have sought her ruin, had he for a moment dreamt it possible.



## CHAPTER XXXIX.

ONE morning Mr. Vere waited upon Dr. ——. The doctor was unprepared for the visit, and raised his eyebrows by way of inquiry as he saw the stranger.

“You are surprised at my intrusion, I perceive, sir. I have called on behalf of Mr. Lyle, who, I believe, is well known to you.”

“On behalf of Mr. Lyle!” echoed the doctor, without any abatement of his surprise.

“Mr. Lyle is a personal acquaintance of mine; a friend, I hope I may say. I feel an interest in his affairs.”

Still the doctor did not appear to comprehend the purpose of Mr. Vere’s visit, and the latter added,

“He is in your debt, I believe, sir?”

“Mr. Lyle is at present in my debt, sir,” said Dr. —, stiffly; “but he is aware that I have no intention of pressing the payment of the debt. I respect Mr. Lyle very much, and shall endeavour to make my time convenient to his.”



"No one can respect Henry Lyle more than I do," returned Vere, "and I honour the man who showed to him such great kindness in a time of difficulty. I can assure you, sir, that I am grateful to you for your consideration towards my friend and schoolfellow."

"There is no need of thanks, Mr. Vere," said the doctor, relaxing from his stiffness. "Mr. Lyle is a man in whom I feel an interest, and I was glad to be able to do him a service, even at the expense of some inconvenience."

Dr. ——— could not forbear letting Mr. Vere know that it had been an inconvenience to him to defer Lyle's debt.

Vere was silent for a few moments, as if embarrassed with the shyness of introducing a difficult question. Dr. ——— waited patiently for him to speak, and meanwhile examined, with apparent interest, his own nails.

"Dr. ———, I have said that Henry Lyle is a personal friend of mine: would you permit me to act the part of a friend towards him and discharge the debt, and relieve you of the inconvenience you alluded to?"

"But," said the doctor, "would Mr. Lyle consent? Is he aware that you are making such a proposal?"

"I am afraid that Lyle would be very angry with me, did he know that I have done so; he is thoroughly independent, and I honour him for it," said Vere, laughing slightly; "I should not dare tell him at once what I had done; but, poor fellow, he is really rather hard pressed just now, and will be, until he has his health again." He paused, and then added, "Will you allow me, my dear sir, to repeat my offer?"



"And what when Mr. Lyle reverts to the debt?" inquired the doctor.

"Tell him that it has been cancelled, but do not mention by whom," answered Vere.

The doctor looked at him for a short time mutely, then held out his hand towards him.

"You are a kind-hearted and a noble-minded man, Mr. Vere; you have my sincere admiration."

"My dear sir," said Vere, deprecatingly, "I pray you, do not speak so; it would be but a common act of friendship."

Dr. ——— was by no means sorry to have his debt paid without further trouble, and in his simplicity and kindness showed his satisfaction in his looks.

"But Mr. Lyle's acknowledgment, for he would give me one: shall I give it to you, Mr. Vere?"

"That, I think, may go into the fire," said Vere, carelessly; and he leaned over the grate as the doctor was busy at the other end of the room, and placed the note in his waistcoat-pocket instead of giving it to the flames. Dr. ——— came forward and handed Vere the receipt for the money, at which the latter gentleman laughed, and saying, "This looks very formal indeed, my dear sir," placed it also in his pocket.



## CHAPTER XL.

BOTH the Miss Delavilles looked very shocked: the elder was quite put out in her crochet calculations that morning, and Miss Bella shrugged her shoulders. Each equally longed for some opportune visitor that day, to whom might be detailed all the particulars of the startling facts; the welcome person came in the form of Mr. Vere. He was not allowed long to remain in ignorance of the prevailing excitement. The fire was opened by the elder of the ladies.

"Now, what do you think, Mr. Vere? you will never believe me, but, really, it is very distressing."

"It is, indeed," said Vere; "I fully believe you."

"What a droll man!" said Miss Delaville; "listen first to what I am speaking of—poor Augusta Lyle!"

Vere turned quickly round towards the lady, and seemed about to make some hasty exclamation, but he forbore, and said in a quiet voice,



“What of Mrs. Lyle?”

“Why, with his illness, and the mismanagement of his affairs, I suppose—he is no hand at business, you know—and one thing and another——”

“He? I thought you were about to tell me of your friend Mrs. Lyle,” interrupted Vere.

“Yes, yes; but of course I mean her husband.”

“Oh, of course; I beg pardon.”

“Well, I find they are so reduced, he being unable to work, that—what do you think, Mr. Vere? Augusta, poor thing! is actually taking in needlework for their support!”

“Poor thing!” echoed Miss Bella, in a tone of deep commiseration.

Mr. Vere made no answering comment until Miss Delaville added,

“Is it not dreadful, now?”

“Very dreadful, indeed,” he said, mechanically.

“But the worst part of it is this,” rejoined Miss Delaville; “if people are reduced, I can imagine their being obliged to do such things, to work for their support; but I can assure you, Mr. Vere, that Augusta Lyle spoke of it to-day in the most open manner before Mr. B——. I never was more shocked in my life: of course, he could not, as a gentleman, express any surprise; but what must he have thought?”

“Probably, that Mrs. Lyle takes in needle-work for her own and her husband’s support,” said Vere, quietly.

“But surely, one need not talk of such things. One would think that Mrs. Lyle had been a workwoman all her life, by



the cool manner in which she spoke : I felt quite ashamed for her."

"That was very kind in you," observed Mr. Vere.

"Yes ; at any rate, if I must do such things, I would not let all the world know," ejaculated Miss Bella ; and then added, "I heard Mrs. Jerningham say—you know Mrs. Jerningham?"

"The lady who giggles and lisps. Yes, I have that honour," said Vere.

"Well, I heard Mrs. Jerningham say, that she really did not know which way to look when she was in one of the fancy-work shops in Regent-street, and Mrs. Lyle entered. She spoke to the woman behind the counter in the most unconcerned manner of the work she had been doing herself ; and then seeing Mrs. Jerningham, turned round to her, and talked just in her old style. I would take some time, when there was not a chance of meeting with my acquaintances, I must say, for carrying out business of that sort. I would have a little more proper pride."

"And yet," said Vere, in love with candor when shown to him in the person of Augusta, "if Mrs. Lyle is not ashamed of doing the act, why should she blush to acknowledge it? If there is shame connected with it, let it be left undone."

Miss Delaville looked surprised, as if she thought her visitor was talking badinage, and Vere continued :

"I perceive I have astonished you by personating, for however small a moment, the moralist ; I have assumed a character not my own, you think. Well, it is easily thrown off again. Let us be worldly-minded and critical, and be properly ashamed



of all that fashion might not appreciate. Mrs. Lyle might have been excused for taking in needlework ; indeed, some might romantically say such an occupation is praiseworthy, looking at the influencing motive ; but bravely to do so, without concealment or disguise—good gracious ! what will people think ?”

Miss Delaville did not exactly know how to take this speech. she was at a loss for an answer for a moment ; but she was a lady not easily silenced, and soon recovering her surprise, she said,

“ I never could understand you, you droll creature ! Sometimes I almost think you are laughing at me.”

“ Never, I hope,” said Vere, looking serious.

“ I don’t believe a word you say, you know,” said the lady, facetiously. “ You have always some hidden meaning in every speech, and are really the most jesuitical and amusing man I know.”

“ I believe all you tell me.” said Vere, “ and especially the latter sentence.”

“ Do you hear him ?” appealed, generally, Miss Delaville. “ Conceited wretch ! There, go and talk to mamma or to Bella, to any one rather than to me, if they will endure you patiently, I am tired of you.” And immediately after the lively lady was rattling on in the same mad manner, forgetful of her mental fatigue ; while Arthur Vere, with a smile of attentive amusement on his lips, and an occasional brilliant answer, was outwardly all-observant of her conversation, while his thoughts were wandering away to Augusta Lyle, working for the support of her sick husband.



There was in the heart of Arthur Vere still that "pledge and token of a better nature," the capacity of venerating virtue in others, a vestige which he strove hard to clear away, and succeeded admirably in his endeavours to hide from others.

It has been said by some modern author, that in the days of Charles the Second, those courtiers who made show of the greatest profligacy and irreligion, were the highest favourites with the ladies, because they went to greater lengths of infidelity, or, indeed, profanity, than the women naturally *dared* to go themselves; and that these were looked upon by their fair admirers as a species of heroes in wickedness. Could it be some such feeling in the minds of the Miss Delavilles which caused their enthusiastic admiration for Mr. Vere, whom they acknowledged to be "shockingly wicked," at the same time that he was "charmingly clever?"

It has sometimes occurred to us that young men and boys feel a kind of mock bravery in having done something worse than the generality would do at their ages; as if those who are most fearless amongst men, are not ever the same who stand most in dread of offending God.

True courage is much miscalculated; and that which is called boldness, is very often nothing more than insolence. It needs a braver heart to meet unmoved contemptuous looks or opprobrious words, than it would to go to the fire or sword—simply because in the one we seem to stand alone, and all men are with us at the other



## CHAPTER XLI.

"Who is it from?" asked Augusta, as Lyle opened a letter, and read it through in silence, the changes of his face giving evidence that the information contained in the paper disturbed him.

"I cannot understand it," answered he. "This is a complete puzzle."

"What is it? who is it from?" inquired Augusta again.

"It is a lawyer's letter, Augusta; but I am not acquainted with the solicitor's name,"

Augusta looked alarmed, as all kinds of thoughts flitted through her mind at the mention of a lawyer's letter, and Henry Lyle resumed:

"It is a notice of arrest, or whatever it is called,"—Lyle knew no more of law than did Augusta,—"for Dr. ——'s bill."

"Dr. ——'s bill!" echoed Augusta.



That it is which confuses me. Why should Dr. — take legal measures without first trying other means? It appears very unfriendly. But Gussy, who do we know of the name of Vere? There is a Vere mentioned as claimant of the debt."

"None but Arthur Vere," answered Augusta, turning pale.

"He could not have anything to do with this, surely," said Lyle. "Dr. — seems to have made over his debt into the hands of some one of the name; and yet Vere is not a common name."

Augusta looked bewildered at her husband.

"What is the matter, dear?" asked he.

"I am afraid, Henry, that it is Arthur Vere."

"Why, Gussy, what should he interfere in this for? Besides, I saw Vere but a few days since pass this house, and catching sight of me, he nodded, in a perfectly unembarrassed manner."

"What shall we do, Harry?"

"I do not know, yet: we must consider: there is plenty of time, Augusta; plenty of time to think over it," said Lyle, soothingly.

"Will you not speak to Dr. —, and ask him why he so acted?"

Lyle hesitated, as if conflicting feelings were at work in his breast; when he spoke, it was,

"No, I shall not speak to him. He has, it seems to me, acted in a very ungenerous manner towards us, after having assured us he was in no hurry for payment. His conduct has been quite uncalled for. I shall not have anything more to do with him."



"Supposing we cannot think of any means of paying him before the time is up!" said Augusta, with alarm.

"Well, Gussy, dear, don't look so frightened. Many a better man than I, doubtless, has been in the Bench before now. It cannot be avoided. I did not make myself ill purposely, and I will use every means to extricate myself, if I can. If I cannot——"

"How wicked of Dr. ——!" said Augusta, indignantly.

"I do not understand the business at all, I confess. I suppose it will be cleared before long. It seems very odd. The writ is served in another name. Dr. ——'s name does not appear, excepting as having been my creditor. Perhaps he is not so any longer. I begin to regret that I do not know a little more of law matters than I do."

"Oh, I am sure that is no matter of regret," said Augusta; "such knowledge could not do you any good."

"Are you so prejudiced against law then?" said Lyle, laughing; "at any rate, it could not do me any harm at present, to be rather less ignorant than I am. All knowledge is valuable, excepting the knowledge of evil. I am afraid you are inclined to class law under the latter head, Gussy."

"Yes, I am," answered she.

"Depend upon it," said Lyle, "that we never yet neglected any acquisition of knowledge, but before long we had cause to regret the neglect; and we never take advantage of an opportunity of acquiring any information, however unlikely at the time it may appear ever to come into use, without afterwards having to congratulate ourselves in having learnt it."



"I wish you would send for Dr. ——," urged Augusta.

"No, no; wait a little. Perhaps Dr. —— may be here in a few days. It is singular that he has not been for some time past."

Everything assumes an air of suspicion when once the feeling has been induced. At any other time Henry Lyle would not have noticed anything in the doctor's conduct.

Several days more passed, and Dr. —— did not come, and Augusta became alarmed, as plan after plan, having been discussed, fell to the ground, as not feasible for relieving Henry Lyle from his impending difficulty.



## CHAPTER XLII.

"A GENTLEMAN in the drawing-room, ma'am, would wish to see you ; he did not give any name."

Augusta passed the servant-girl on the stairs, who delivered her this message ; and opening the door of the dining-room, to her astonishment Mr. Vere stood before her.

"You requested to speak to me," said Augusta, with a tone of formality insensibly influencing her voice.

"I have not seen you alone for a long time, Augusta," said Vere.

"Not since my marriage, I believe," she answered ; and not wishing to enter into any conversation touching times past, Augusta added, to recall him to the object of his visit, "Is it business of any kind Mr. Vere, which made you ask to see me ? Do not detain me longer than you can help, as you know I have pressing duties upon me now. You must excuse," she continued, as she saw his countenance change, "the plainness



or rudeness of my speech. You have done away with all formality of politeness between us. Will you oblige me by stating at once what you would say ;" for he remained still silent, as if undecided.

"I can scarcely believe," said Vere, "that I listen to the same person as the gentle and kind-hearted girl whom I knew, not long since, as Augusta Leigh."

"Am I ungente," asked she, "or unkind in manners now that you express surprise at me?"

"No," answered Vere ; "and you are more engaging in the character of a determined woman than in any other."

"Mr. Vere," said Augusta, "may I ask you again, what is your errand here? I have no time to remain with you idly. Will you tell me why you came and asked for me?"

"He is very ill, then?" said Vere, inquiringly.

"He has been very ill," Augusta answered.

"And you are pecuniarily embarrassed?"

She started, and coloured at his words.

"Never mind, Augusta: how I knew it: I do know it. You are unable to pay Dr. ——'s bill."

"Dr. —— has acted very kindly towards us hitherto," said Augusta, trying to subdue the tears which annoyance at Vere's impertinence was bringing to her eyes. "He had agreed to wait until Henry can work again, which he will do, I trust, before long. It rests between Dr. —— and my husband alone, and does not in any way interest you, that I can see. Why have you interfered?"

"Excuse me, Augusta," answered Vere ; "it rests between



your husband and me, rather. I will explain to you in what manner."

He took from his breast-pocket the paper which he had received from Dr. ——.

"You did not take into consideration the fact that Dr. —— is a poor man. I have paid the debt contracted by your husband, and I am now his creditor in the place of the doctor."

Augusta flushed indignantly.

"And what right had you to take such an office or yourself?" she asked. "How——" but she stopped, and a dim sense of the certainty of the evils which Vere's act might be bringing upon Lyle swept across her mind. She leant her head upon her hands, and burst into tears.

Vere looked at her for some moments, as she tried to check her sobs, which even his presence could not enable her to succeed in doing; but his countenance did not change.

By a violent effort at self-control Augusta at length ceased crying, and addressed him:

"I am ill and nervous, and at present easily upset, or you should not have seen me give way to tears. I wish to know what power that paper gives you over my husband?"

"The same power which Dr. —— would have possessed, had he kept the debt in his possession," answered Vere, coldly; "the power to prosecute your husband for the payment of it."

"And how," asked she, "does that acknowledgment come into your hands?"

"I have, I think, already told you that Dr. ——'s bill is paid," Vere answered.



"Dr. —— could not have known what sort of man you are," said Augusta, excitedly.

Vere answered, "Probably not."

"You intend to use that power!"

"Most assuredly."

Augusta turned her head away from him that he should not see her face, for the emotion which his words caused was struggling to make itself seen.

Vere continued, speaking slowly and distinctly, "You are unable to meet the debt, I know. Your husband's health will not admit of his working for some months to come. There is but one alternative; and what do you anticipate will be the effect of a prison upon him in his present state? Imagine to yourself the excitement, the anxiety, the mental agony——"

"Stop, stop!" exclaimed Augusta. "Be silent! You torture me. It would kill him, it would kill him! Mr. Vere, think for a moment."

"Ah!" said Vere, regarding her fixedly, "has not the time come of which I spoke? Do not you now regret having linked yourself with that man? Think of yourself as the wife of a poverty-stricken man, a man dying of destitution, in the Bench, without a hand to help him!"

"Oh, you wretched man!" said Augusta.

"The time has come, Augusta; you do regret it."

"No; not for a moment," answered she.

"You do regret; you will regret, when you find yourself unable to help yourself or him. You are in my power."



"Do you think I would change my position as Lyle's wife?" she asked.

"Would you not change it now, when the fact of your being his wife has brought all this upon him?" Vere asked.

Augusta would have shrieked as the horrid words of Vere showed her the true meaning of all his previous questions; but at the same instant she recollected that Henry Lyle was in the room above, and that such an ebullition of feeling on her part would bring him to the room where she was. She writhed in agony of heart, and the tears came burning hot from her eyes.

"Did I not tell you, that you should curse the day on which you linked yourself to him?" asked Vere. "Did I not swear to you, in the hour when you refused to listen to me, that my revenge should surely work itself out, through you, upon him?"

"Through him upon me, you would say, rather. Mr. Vere," said Augusta, with a sudden impulse, looking him full in the face, "think for a moment. Spare him! he never injured you." The sentences were said with difficulty, shortly, and at intervals.

"You refused me!" answered he.

"At a time when I loved and was bound to Henry Lyle."

"You had neither the will nor the inclination that it should be otherwise, I know," Vere answered. "But I remember facts only, and my hatred towards him. I have told you before this, that I am a determined man."

"And yet you profess to have loved me?" asked Augusta, thinking to work upon the softer feelings of his nature.



"I did love you, Augusta : you know it," he answered, but so coldly, that had he any kinder sentiment in the remembrance of his affection, he did not let it be seen.

"It will kill him," repeated Augusta, vacantly. "Mr. Vere have mercy on him ! have mercy on me !"

He smiled slightly, but she saw the movement of his features however slight, and her face flushed with indignation.

"I was mad to think for a moment of appealing to your sympathy. I retract the words I used."

"As you will," he answered.

"Oh, my Lyle !" groaned Augusta, unable to repress the misery of her thoughts from finding vent in words ; but remembering that Vere was still present, she continued :

"Do not flatter yourself that you will work your own evil will, even now. I feel confident that assistance will be given us ; and at this hour, with a full perception of your bad influence before my mind, I would not change positions with you for a kingdom, triumphant as you suppose yourself to be. Mr. Vere, you have earned revenge—that which you sought for—and you have crushed me to the earth with sorrow, not with regret ; but I do not envy you the feeling with which at this moment you must contemplate your own work. Which will be the happier of the two ? You, the triumphant one, or Henry Lyle, whom you think to have made miserable ? You are the most unhappy man in existence, Mr. Vere, although your haughty spirit would not acknowledge it—unhappy as must have been the evil angels when they had succeeded in their wicked plans."



"You are as complimentary as ever, Augusta," said Vere, 'but, as you know, I have my own ideas of happiness.' Still he stood as if he had no intention of going.

"Will you have the kindness to leave me?" said Augusta.

At that moment she heard the door of the room above open, and her husband's step descending the stairs.

"Go, Mr. Vere, I entreat you!" exclaimed she, almost frantically. "He must not see you. Go! it is the only thing I ask of you." And in her terror lest Lyle should enter before Mr. Vere had left, she pushed the latter towards the door, and repeated over and over again, "Go, I entreat you."

But Vere had no intention of going. He watched her excitement calmly, and remained unmoved until the door opened from without and Henry Lyle entered.

"Augusta," said he, upon seeing the back of Vere, "I did not know that you had a visitor. I have been wondering what detained you so long. Why did not you tell me?"

Augusta's lips parted as if she were going to speak, but she was unable to articulate a syllable; and Lyle looked in surprise from her, as she sank upon the sofa and turned pale, to the other occupant of the room, who now confronted him, and showed the features of Arthur Vere.



## CHAPTER XLIII

THE last time Lyle and Vere had met it had been, at least outwardly, in a friendly manner, and upon the latter turning his face towards him, Henry Lyle held out his hand, although testifying in his face the astonishment he felt at finding Mr. Vere alone with his wife, and unable to account for the agitation of Augusta's manner.

But Mr. Vere in no degree reciprocated any such cordial feeling, and he addressed Lyle without taking the hand offered him.

"I am come upon no friendly mission, Mr. Lyle, as I may as well explain to you in a few words."

"No, no," exclaimed Augusta, looking imploringly towards Vere; "I will tell him all, I will explain all. Mr. Vere, I again entreat of you to leave us."

Henry Lyle glanced confusedly towards Augusta, and then indignantly at Vere, and his face flushed angrily.

"Mr. Vere, I will thank you to explain to me at once your



errand here ;”—and, turning to Augusta, his voice changed to a sad, grave tone—“and let us have no interruption ; you will oblige me by being silent.”

It was the first time Henry Lyle had ever spoken so reproachfully to her, and the words struck upon Augusta’s heart more painfully than anything which Vere had said that day ; the tears which had only come at intervals, and which she had forced back as they came, now rained from her eyes like a shower, as she leaned her head upon the cushion of the sofa. For a more painful feeling than any bodily ache or pecuniary difficulty had shot through the noble heart of Lyle as he saw the glance directed by Augusta towards Vere, and equal with the strength of his love was the agony of the momentary thought—momentary only. Jealousy is an unworthy feeling, for it is the parent of suspicion and distrust, and the soul of Henry Lyle was too upright and too generous to give food upon which it could be nourished. The grave look of his face changed to sadness, and, unheeding the presence of Vere, he went to Augusta, and raising her head from the pillow, he kissed her, saying,

“I was wrong, my darling ; I ask your forgiveness.”

“And now, Mr. Vere ?” said Lyle, turning towards the visitor, who had been waiting to speak.

Vere in a few words explained the position in which he had placed Lyle, and the claims which he made upon him, to the natural surprise of Henry, who demanded, when he had come to an end of his speech, as Augusta had before, what possible interest Vere could have in his debts.



"Ask Augusta," answered Vere; "she can explain, I dare say, more feelingly than I, the interest I have in your ruin."

"My ruin?" echoed Lyle; "a man does not wish the ruin of another unless he has sustained injury at his hands. What motive have I ever given you for revenge?"

"Ask Augusta," repeated Vere; "she can tell you some of the reasons for my conduct, although not all. I shall not enter into explanations; it is enough that I hate you, Henry Lyle, and always have from the first hour I saw you—is it not?"

"Quite enough, I suppose, for you," answered Lyle; "and hatred, like other evil feelings, cannot always be accounted for. I am sorry for you, Mr. Vere. I wish you good morning."

"Augusta," commenced Vere—— But Lyle interrupted him:

"Sir, I will be obliged to you to address my wife otherwise than by her Christian name."

Vere knit his brow, and turning from Lyle, repeated "Augusta," in a calm tone of insolence.

"Oh! Henry, dear Henry!" exclaimed Augusta, as she observed her husband about to answer; but recollecting herself, she stopped suddenly.

Henry Lyle looked at her, and smiled sadly.

"I entreat you let him alone," resumed Augusta, "he is an infamous bad man—let him go—do not mind his words. Mr. Vere, must I tell you again to go? Will you not attend to my wishes?"

The expression of Vere's face underwent a change, but he



did not speak. Again Lyle's face flushed with anger, and he took a step towards Vere. It was with a violent effort that Lyle had refrained from speaking; his head felt dizzy, his heart turned sick; for the excitement, the anxiety, and pain combined, had again ruptured the blood-vessel, which was but partially healed. Augusta saw him turn very pale.

"Mr. Vere," said Lyle, turning towards the intruder, "I am very ill at present—you will oblige me by leaving me: I cannot speak to you now."

And at length Vere left them, or disappeared in some way, for Augusta became entirely engrossed with her husband, who was again covered with blood, and did not care to look whether the unwelcome visitor was there or not.



## CHAPTER XLIV.

HAD Lyle been consulted, he would probably, at that juncture, have required the services of another physician than his old friend, Dr. —; but Augusta's anxiety saw no time for delay, or thought of nothing but the one fact, that medical assistance was required, and in obedience to the order, "Go immediately for the doctor"—the servant girl of course went to the accustomed house, and almost as soon as the girl returned, the kind old man was himself by Henry Lyle's side, asking no questions, but administering over again the styptics which Augusta knew too well.

When the first visit was over, it was necessary to inform Dr. — of the cause of Lyle's renewed illness; in fact, Augusta had told him all almost unthinkingly before she had considered the advisability or otherwise of so doing.

He kindly took her hand, and expressed sympathy with her anxiety, adding,



"That Mr. Vere seems a desperate villain."

Augusta looked the doctor in the face, but she did not express the question which rose in her mind. He seemed to guess it, for he asked,

"You do not think that I was in any way aware of Mr. Vere's intention, dear Mrs. Lyle?"

"I do not understand it at all," answered Augusta; "I could not imagine why you should. No," continued she, frankly, "I do not now think that you knew anything about it—you are too kind; but, indeed, I have not been able to think at all fairly."

The doctor murmured something between his teeth which was not complimentary to Mr. Arthur Vere; and turning again to Augusta, he said,

"The fact is, I have been acting like an old fool, and have been taken in. I hope that Lyle does not think that I had anything to do with this."

"He shall not any longer if he does so now," said Augusta. And to change the subject, which he perceived was a painful one, Dr. ——— commenced speaking of Henry. He tried to talk off the seriousness of this fresh attack, but there was, in doing so, a nervous restlessness in his eyes, and a compression of the lips as he listened to Augusta, which belied his professionally assumed vivacity.

Augusta touched as lightly as she could upon her own acquaintance with Mr. Vere, in explanation of his conduct, but the old doctor's face reddened angrily as he heard it.

"Never you mind; set your heart at rest, my dear," said



he ; " the scoundrel shall not have his own way ; I will see to that."

Augusta was about to speak, but he forestalled her, guessing her intention :

" It will not inconvenience me, don't think it ; I can easily repay him the bill he fraudulently obtained of me. I know where to lay my hand upon it," continued he, patting her head, and speaking very fast, for he knew he was telling falsehoods, and would have some trouble in procuring the money readily, and being not accustomed to that sort of thing, he felt nervous and uncomfortable.

Dr. — was anxious also to get away, in order to think over a plan of carrying out his intentions ; yet he could not resist calling upon Mr. Vere even before doing so ; for he felt indignant against that individual, and was foolishly in a hurry to express it. Dr. — was a little, short, stout man ; his face was rather red ; his eyes were small, but prominent ; he wore spectacles, had a large nose, and rather a large stomach ; his dress was old-fashioned and careless, and his manner hurried and impatient. His was not a dignified figure, nor was his voice commanding.

As Vere rose from his seat, and, advancing a step or two, bowed towards the visitor, every casual observer would have let his sympathies go over to the side of the splendid, princely-looking man who stood in contrast with the little doctor, with his youth, his beauty, his intellectual countenance, more pale than usual, perhaps, from too late hours—the interested spectator might have argued from study and mental exertion.



"Sir," said Dr. —, speaking very fast and agitatedly, "I have called to let you know that I am aware of your infamous behaviour."

"Sir," answered Mr. Vere, "I am obliged to you for the courtesy of your visit."

Vere's voice was never an engaging one, for it was unfeeling and uncordial, but he smiled at the conclusion of his speech.

With whom would still have been the sympathy of the spectator?

And yet the little doctor had called in the purest virtue of indignation at the fraud practiced upon himself and the injury done his friends, with no feeling in his bosom but an honest desire for the punishment of wickedness and vice, and the maintenance of true religion and virtue. He was the good spirit of the piece, and Vere the evil angel. What a pity that their relative positions could not have been better typified by their exteriors, as they would have been were life a pantomime. Is it a pity? Are we then such children yet, that it is necessary to clothe the Truth and the Right in beautiful garments to make them attractive to us? No; we are not such children. The doctor saw the contemptuous smile which sat on the face of Vere as he answered, and he wondered in himself how, the last time that man had held an interview with him, and had been so engagingly concerned, and so treacherously had professed friendship towards Henry Lyle—how he, Dr. —, could have admired him so much for his beauty and his insinuating address. Arthur Vere did not seem the same man.



"Henry Lyle is seriously ill," resumed the doctor, "and made so by your impertinent interference in his affairs. Mr. Vere, I shall beg to be allowed to pay back to you the bill which was transferred into your hands, the acknowledgment of which I had imagined you destroyed; for I conceived I had a gentleman to deal with, and not a scoundrel."

Vere surveyed the doctor attentively for a moment. Perhaps he was reflecting what ought to be his course, following upon the concluding words of his companion's address. No alarming results, however, took place. He simply answered with a bow.

"I am a plain-spoken man, and not given to mincing my words," resumed the other. And Vere replied parenthetically:

"You are quite right, sir; I admire your candour."

"I shall hope to call upon you again to-morrow," said Dr. —.

"To-morrow," answered Vere. "I believe I shall be out of town to-morrow; you can call upon my solicitor if you have anything to say."

"I shall hope to enable Lyle to repay you the sum you now claim of him."

"Mr. Lyle ought to be very much obliged to you for your friendship," answered Vere.

Dr. — regarded his companion for a few moments in silence, as if he would have wished to speak; yet Vere still remained with unmoved countenance, and the honest doctor shrugged his shoulders.

"Are you aware, sir," at length he asked, "that you have



done a most rascally thing? You appear to look upon your conduct in a very tame light."

"I am perfectly aware of what I have done," said Vere, and I have partly gained my object.

"And the contempt of all who hear of your actions."

"Indeed!" said Vere.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed the doctor, unable to restrain his surprise, "you are the most cool villain I ever met with: you are a model for a villain."

"You are complimentary," said Vere, giving a short laugh, as he saw the doctor's face redden with anger and disgust; "allow me to ring the bell, that my servant may show you the door. I wish you good morning. To-morrow, I believe you said, you expect to meet my demand. I am indebted to you for your visit."

Dr. — said no further; he was speechless with surprise and indignation. His face became more red than nature made it; his eyes flashed vividly, and he retained scarcely sufficient self-possession to bow and leave the room.

His exterior was no more prepossessing than it had been on his entrance, and Vere still stood, calm and handsome, if such beauty is handsome, as at the first. With which of the two men are your sympathies really, reader? What, though the one is ugly and awkward, and the other graceful and attractive, we are not yet, we trust, entirely such children as some men think.

Arthur Vere was annoyed. He had not anticipated the course taken by the doctor. He was not aware that the latter



could readily raise the money to repay him Henry Lyle's debt; and his plan had, therefore, but partially succeeded.

Yet the words of the doctor recurred to his mind, "Henry Lyle is seriously ill." Can it be possible that man should find a pleasure in such cruel intelligence? The thought did not evidently induce any other feeling in the breast of Arthur Vere.

He had been, as we have said, superlatively self-collected during his late interview, but as he sat down by the table, and, taking a pen into his hand, prepared to write, the paleness of his face grew unnaturally white, and he passed his pocket-handkerchief over his forehead to wipe away the perspiration. Yet the day was by no means warm. Then, rising, he took from the mantleshef a phial, and, pouring out the contents, drank it: for much of Arthur Vere's strength and energy in public was now artificial and borrowed.



## CHAPTER XLV.

DR. ——— was more successful than even he had anticipated, but the success was late. There were but two days intervening before the writ would be out. Henry Lyle would not take advantage of any shuffling means to elude the consequences of his debt, and waited in full expectation of an arrest.

He spoke carelessly of the fact to Augusta, as if it were a matter of almost indifference to him what issue came, for he saw her look pale and frightened at every knock and ring; but it was truly no matter of indifference to him: his very soul revolted against the disgrace, though he thought little of the inconvenience. His independent spirit had been based upon his unsullied honour, and what, though he was blameless in the approaching trial, yet he was ranked amongst dishonoured and dishonourable men.

He feared his own heart, as the colour mounted to his face, at the thought of what would before long take place. Had his independence, then, which he had considered self-respect,



been but a disguise of pride? He yet retained his self-respect, for he had done no wrong, and should outward circumstance, and the opinions of others, cause him to blush when there was no real occasion of shame? Yet the feeling was overpowering, although beyond his explanation; like Augusta's unaccountable aversion to shaking hands with an infidel, which she only knew, and could give no definite or satisfactory reason for.

Henry Lyle waited for Augusta to give him some explanation of the strangeness of Mr. Vere's conduct on the late occasion towards herself; yet he asked her no questions about it, and it was not until the excitement caused by Vere's visit was over, and Henry Lyle was able to listen calmly to her conversation, that she told him all the circumstances of her acquaintance with Arthur Vere, his threats against them both, and his determined seeking for revenge.

"I can scarcely understand such a feeling," said Lyle, "when Mr. Vere professes to have loved you; but never fear, Gussy, his plans will not succeed; he may think that they will—for a time, perhaps, he may seem to have his will—but it is not his hand which works in our affairs: we should be infidels did we think so."

Augusta looked quickly at Lyle, thinking he must be aware of what she knew of Vere's infidelity by the allusion; but his face showed that he was not.

"You must not talk on this or any subject, dear Henry," said she, remembering the doctor's injunctions. And Henry Lyle lay back in his chair, and his thoughts roamed back over years of the past.



He remembered a playground at a public school, and a crowd of boys of all ages and sizes occupied in their various pursuits. They were divided into two parties, and a taller, older boy headed each of the bands. A little fellow ran in the way between the two groups just as they were about to commence playing.

"Stand out of the way, you young fool!" exclaimed the voice of the leader of the opposite band to the one to which the intruder belonged—"stand out of the way, will you?"

The child—he was a mere child—stood still in alarm at the sharpness of the voice addressed to him, previous to moving as he was told, and the next instant he was saluted by a blow from the speaker.

"For shame, Vere!" said the other leader, stepping forward indignantly, his fair face flushing with anger at the injury. "Hit one of your own size if you dare, not a child like that."

Several others belonging to either party also called out "Shame!" and the little boy commenced crying, and looked in a frightened way from one to the other.

The boy addressed as Vere came forward to the front: "If *I dare!*" said he, tauntingly; "you shall soon see if I dare." And he threw off his jacket, preparatory to inviting his opponent to a trial of strength.

"I am not going to fight," said the other, coolly; "there is no occasion for that."

"Ain't you, indeed?" returned Vere. "You're a pretty fellow to talk of daring! If you don't fight at once, I'll strike you as I did Charley. Come, Lyle, are you afraid of fighting?"



I thought you were so very brave just now. Self-made champions should be prepared to take the consequences of their chivalric interference."

Henry Lyle made no further answer, but throwing off his jacket also, he went at once into the fight. They were both boys, and without much consideration, certainly without the cool argument and reflection of men.

The mill did not take long: after a few moments of mixed sparring and struggling, not quite scientific but very effectual, enlivened by cries of "Go it, Harry!" "That's right, Arthur—give it him!" equally divided amongst the admiring boys, who urged on either or both in turn, Vere was thrown, and Lyle stood over him, rather breathless, but very triumphant.

It was but for a moment, though: Henry Lyle stooped towards his adversary, and said,

"I hope you are not hurt, Vere; I am sorry, now, I fought you. I beg your pardon. But you oughtn't to have hit that little fellow."

He pulled his late opponent up from the ground, and when Vere stood on his feet, Lyle said, holding out his hand,

"Come, be friends again, there's a good fellow; I don't want to quarrel with you. It is a mere chance that you didn't lick me."

Still Arthur Vere looked gloomily. He took Lyle's hand, held towards him, but he did not return the cordial shake in a like spirit.

Then there was a day for giving prizes, and all the same boys assembled in the great schoolroom, in enforced silence,



broken only by whispers and murmurs occasionally, and the hum of expectation.

"Vere, of course, both of them," was heard above the whispers. And Vere also heard it, and showed by his countenance that no doubt of the truth of his companions' guesses crossed his mind.

"For drawing, Lyle: there can be no question." And it seemed to be universally agreed that Vere and Lyle were to carry the prizes of the year.

The doctor, whose presence brought with it a salutary awe and decorum, now commenced the business of the meeting, and after some preliminary words, the prizes were given.

"For composition, to Arthur Vere." And Lyle well remembered how Vere's mother, then still a beautiful woman, turned with eyes of fond delight towards the boy of whom she was so proud.

"For classics" (it had been agreed amongst all the boys that Vere would have it, although they had not had much reason for the decision), "to Henry Lyle."

Lyle had also decided that it was to be Vere's, although he had himself been striving for it, and his pleasure was very mixed with surprise, and with regret at Vere's supposed disappointment. Arthur Vere's lip curled haughtily, and he looked with contempt at a band of his young admirers, whose faces showed sympathy with his failure.

"For drawing, Henry Lyle. Lyle you seem to be taking everything this year."

"But that of course," murmured all assembled: there never had been any doubt as to the prize for drawing.



“Young gentlemen,” said the master—and a dead silence followed the address, for all guessed what was coming—“I have now to adjudge a prize—the most important prize of the year—one for which I trust you have all been striving—and I am aware that in giving it to the one whom you must all acknowledge best deserves it, I must cause regret to many of you. I place him, in receiving this book, at the head of all of you, more than his classical attainments or progress in his studies could ever advance him. We cannot all be first, boys, and I am sure I have your cordial approbation and concurrence when I deliver the prize for ‘good and gentlemanly conduct’ into the hands of Henry Lyle.”

The boys shouted, as they would perchance have shouted had any other name followed the doctor’s speech; but they estimated that it was in approval of their master’s decision, and in heartfelt sympathy with Henry Lyle.

It was in sympathy with the ascendant star, who had stood in blank amazement at hearing his own name attached to the complimentary speech of the doctor, and who now went forward towards the desk of authority to receive the splendidly-bound books which the master held in his hands.

The sweet voice of Henry Lyle was heard in answer to the kind words which the doctor addressed to him congratulatory of his success, thanking him for his kindness, and adding, with unaffected simplicity,

“I wish, sir, that I could feel I had better deserved such a prize.”

The stiff, cold manner of Arthur Vere towards him thenceforth, until they both left school; the cutting, sarcastic things



said by him ; the stumbling-blocks placed in Lyle's way ; the attempts to provoke him by insults to break through his resolution and promise never to fight again—for the master had heard of and inquired into the fracas which had, amongst his schoolfellows, gained glory to Lyle, and had seriously spoken to both the boys upon the subject—all these incidents, which had been buried for years, now Henry Lyle remembered.

And then he had lost sight of Arthur Vere, and only heard of him at intervals through others ; how he had distinguished himself at the university—where Lyle had so longed to go, and where he could have taken honours as easily as Vere had done—yet that he had made himself remarkable by the looseness of his principles as much as by the brilliancy of his intellect ; how he had published, and successfully, and had been acknowledged publicly as a man of talent and power.

Lyle had expected to hear of his stepping forward in some noble cause, and distinguishing himself ; but Vere seemed content with existing in the enjoyment of his own master-mind, and careless of the advance of others.

Then they had met, when years of separation had made them almost strangers, and Lyle was astonished that the early promise of manly beauty which Arthur Vere, as a boy, had given, had been so gloriously fulfilled, and, as a painter, he looked with admiration at the appearance of his former school-fellow ; yet he was distressed at the want of that in Arthur Vere which, as a poet in feeling, he looked for.

And Henry Lyle could now remember that there had been still in Vere's manner towards himself the old coldness and distance which had arisen in boyhood.



## CHAPTER XLVI.

DR. — was more successful than he had contemplated, but Augusta endured all the horrors of evil anticipation. At the last hour, almost, arrived the doctor, red hot, foaming and energetic: the paper was regained from Vere's solicitor, and Augusta could scarcely believe for a time that all alarm was at an end, and that things were to go on peacefully as before.

Arthur Vere was disgusted at the partial failure of his intention. He did not care that those to whose ears came the facts looked strangely at him and thought him a scoundrel; he had his own ever-ready admirers and flatterers. He imagined himself above public opinion, he, who lived upon public applause.

He went abroad. It was in vain that Mrs. Vere on several occasions put in a plea that he would remain a little longer in England, or allow her to accompany him. An internal voice seemed to urge her now more than ever to cling to him. He



went : and she wept bitterly, as she had often done at parting with him, but with a despairing sense of desolation which, until now, had been unknown to her. She had formed an intimacy with Mrs. Seymour, who, in the kindness of her heart, tried to minister comfort to poor Mrs. Vere, and spent much of her time with her.

The life of Mrs. Seymour was made up of little kindnesses and small attentions, unobserved, perhaps, of men, because they did not wear the gloss with which large charities shine, but more necessary to the daily happiness and comfort of others than the greater benefits.

It is but seldom that we have the opportunity of largely assisting our fellow-creatures, but all, as Henry Lyle said, may give kind words and encouraging smiles ; and they who fail in such will never be the men to greatly benefit their neighbours, excepting through a corrupt and sophisticated feeling. It was generally known that Vere was the author of the pamphlets we have mentioned, and many a man looked reproachfully upon him in consequence ; but further than giving to his manner an air of bravado and extra indifference, Arthur Vere seemed careless that the world spoke and thought ill of him.

At this time Augusta received a letter from Philip Wilson, full of affection towards herself and Lyle, and kind sympathy, telling of his own success in speculation, and how he had now put out the money he had realized to good and secure interest ; and with all sorts of kind hopes and wishes, Philip remitted to Augusta no inconsiderable sum of the first fruits of his labour, as he called it, signing himself her affectionate *brother*, in case



she should feel any disinclination to taking the money from him.

At this juncture Mr. Grant's affairs were set in order, his will proved, and the legacies discharged ; and that which had been left to Henry Lyle was paid over to his account.

"I declare we are quite rich," said Augusta, with animation. "Is it not strange that all this should come at once? If it had only, some of it, arrived a few months earlier!"

"It is always the way in this world, Gussy," answered Henry. "Perhaps to-morrow somebody else may send us more. But we must enclose Dr. —— his account now, before we begin to enjoy ourselves."

"Enjoy ourselves!" repeated Augusta ; "dear Henry, it is sufficient pleasure to me to see you capable of enjoyment." And she burst into tears. "I may cry now, may I not? My head has felt so full for weeks past."

"You silly girl! now there is nothing to cry about," said Lyle, laughing.

"Then I shall choose that as my part of the enjoyment for the next half-hour," answered Augusta, continuing to act as good as her word.

The warm spring weather was come on, and Henry Lyle shook off his illness once more.

Once more in their happy little home: Lyle's health progressing favourably to all appearance, and Augusta able to think without turmoil and to look forward with hope. Again Lyle stood at his easel ; again he talked and laughed, and Augusta listened as before ; again she played and sang to her guitar, and spoke of Philip Wilson's return, and of all the old days



gone by, when first Lyle had come to her father's house and she had begun to live in loving him. This space of quiet repose seemed like a green spot in the anxious life of Augusta, and she resigned herself to all the luxury of enjoyment, perhaps in a conviction that even this was earthly, and a prescience that it could not last.

"Henry, my dearest," said she one night, as they sat as usual alone together, "does Mr. Vere, do you think, imagine that he has made us any the less happy by his supposed revenge? How very impotent the efforts of man appear, even those of such a man as Mr. Vere, who boasted himself almost omnipotent."

"The most determined man is comparatively impotent, Augusta, for in wrong he fights against God, whereas, in the effort to do well, the will of man is almost Godlike. Is it not a beautiful moral upon the face of Truth and Right? We might say with justice, instead of 'such a man is strong in the cause of Right,' 'he is leagued with the Almighty Himself,' for God pervades the whole creation in the minds of His creatures, and looks out at all times in men's good actions and good attempts."

"Mr. Vere has gone abroad," observed Augusta; "Mrs. Seymour told me so, and the Miss Delavilles are, I suppose, of course, disconsolate."

It seemed curious to Augusta that Henry Lyle never suspected Vere to be the author of the the tracts which he had answered, and that the knowledge of the fact never came to him: but by the time that Lyle was able to move about and interest



himself in everyday things, the excitement of the contest was over, Vere had been abused and forgotten, and had gone abroad, and nobody cared much about him.

Moreover, Henry Lyle, at all times of a shy and secluded disposition, did not mix much in general society, and, since his illness, was unable to do so even so much as before, in consequence of the doctor's orders being laid upon him that he should not expose himself to the night air.

Augusta fondly imagined that Lyle gained strength weekly, but at times her fears and anxiety were revived by seeing how the least exertion would bring a languor and depression over him, which he found it difficult to disguise.

His energetic mind would carry him through fatigue, but the evening would find him completely overcome with the effort, and at times the horrid, fearful cough would return, and throughout the night, make the heart of Augusta beat with anxiety.

Yet it was lovely warm weather, and Lyle seemed thoroughly to enjoy it. All his old friends were delighted to see him about again, and made all sorts of foolish and indiscreet remarks relative to his reduced and altered appearance.

Meanwhile the Miss Delavilles were engrossed with Mr. B——, and spent their time in annoying him with constant attentions, and striving to induce him to occupy the pedestal which formerly had belonged to Arthur Vere.

The summer passed and the autumn months returned, and with them all the alarming symptoms in Henry Lyle. He did not tell Augusta how he again spit blood: he tried to smother



the cough when he could ; he shook off the apathy and languor which oppressed him ; and forced himself to talk and act as usual.

One afternoon he met with his old friend Dr. —, as the doctor was coming out of the house of a patient whom he had been visiting.

“Well,” said the old gentleman, holding out his hand, “how do you get on?” And immediately afterwards, feeling the fever in which Lyle was, he added, “I say, Lyle, you must be careful ; you should stop at home and nurse yourself, instead of going about in this way. I hope you have not been imprudent.”

Lyle answered that he had not, but at the same time told him of what had taken place.

“Well, well,” said the doctor, trying to pretend it was nothing of consequence, “such things will happen, but you must be very careful of yourself, Henry Lyle, indeed you must, my dear boy.”

“I know perfectly well what you mean,” answered Lyle. “I am well aware that I am dying, and all the care in the world would not make more than a few months’ difference in my life.”

“Pooh !” said the doctor, blinking his eyes, for he did not feel pooh, “dont talk absurdity.”

“You know very well, sir, I am telling truth,” said Lyle.

“My dear Lyle, you must not expose yourself to risks, and all will be well.”

“Rest assured I shall not expose myself,” said Lyle, almost sadly. “My poor Augusta !”



“Yes, for Augusta’s sake, you must be careful. Come, don’t you be thinking you are more ill than you are. I have seen much worse cases than yours perfectly right again.”

“Very well,” answered Lyle. “I am obliged to you that you have been too honest to mislead me. It is very much kinder. Do not fear I shall imagine myself worse than I am.”

There was not much imagination requisite before long to show Lyle, and everybody else, that all his illness had returned. He was unable to leave the house as the autumn months fell and the winter approached. Augusta suspected all this, but she would not allow her mind to dwell upon it. If at any time the thought that such things might be occurred to her, she averted her mental gaze in affright and horror, and felt disposed to cry out that it must not and should not be, because she dared not contemplate the possibility. She occupied herself in trifles, employing her thoughts as much as she could on the every-day things of life. There was no necessity now for manual labour; that phase of her life was over. The subject which must often have been present to the minds of both was as if by mental consent, avoided by Lyle and Augusta in conversation.

Until one evening, when it was almost dark, Henry Lyle, after a silence during which he had been striving for strength of purpose and command of words, addressed Augusta



## CHAPTER XLVII.

"I KNEW once a man who was dearly loved by his wife, and loved her in return; as dearly as you and I, Augusta, and when sickness came upon him, he found it very hard to believe that anything could ever break up the domestic happiness which he had enjoyed. He found it very hard to submit to the stern fact that all these present things are mutable; for we learn and preach these daily sermons, Gussy, but forget to apply them ever. And when he was ill, for he was very ill, he wilfully shut his eyes to the true state of the case for as long as he possibly could, and persisted in cheating himself with hopes and expectations for the future, partly for his own sake, and partly for the sake of her whose happiness seemed so bound up in his. Was he right, Gussy? Was he acting judiciously or lovingly to her in making her also close her eyes to his danger for so long, only that she might wake up some day to the facts? Hard facts they are, and painful ones. Do you think he acted kindly to her?"



And the calm eyes of Henry Lyle were fixed upon the face of Augusta, earnestly watching the expression of her countenance.

“But, Henry,” said Augusta, as if passing over his questions, and only anxious to hear the sequel of the story, which struck painfully on her heart—“but, Henry, he was not seriously ill, not dangerously ill, was he?”

She could not have dared give herself a reason for the inquiry.

“Yes, dear love, seriously, dangerously, mortally ill: so he was told at length by his physician. But he had felt it for some time himself, and was too great a coward to tell it to her. He feared that her woman’s weakness might overcome her and him also, and forgot that her Christian resignation and high principle would bear her up against even such a trial as their parting. He did her injustice, did he not, Gussy?”

Still his eyes read her countenance, and an expression of terror overspread her face.

“I do not know,” said she, wildly—“I cannot say, Harry. Tell me, he did not die, this man you speak of?”

“What if he had, Augusta, how would she, his wife, have borne it, do you think?”

“Oh, she would have broken her heart, Henry, if she loved him as I love you,” exclaimed Augusta, throwing her arms round his neck. “Poor thing! she could not live without him; indeed she could not.”

“Hush! my dearest girl,” said Henry Lyle; “she would have acted far otherwise. She would have lived on in the



hope and faith of meeting him again, like a noble-hearted woman as she is, remembering that there is always some object in life, even though, for the time, she might feel desolate; that there is ever the same Heaven above her, supporting her through life, the same God to serve; she would have so argued, so thought."

Augusta fixed her eyes upon Lyle's as he spoke, as if scrutinizing the expression of them.

"Are not these also among the sermons which we daily preach, Henry, and never apply to ourselves?"

"They must be applied, Gussy, and before long; we cannot shut our eyes any longer to them."

"What do you mean, Harry? Oh! of what, of whom, are you speaking all this while?"

"Do you love me very much, Augusta?"

She understood it all now, and her arms tightened round his neck; yet she strove very hard to crush her grief, for she knew the effect it always had upon him, and the words, "Do you love me very much, Augusta?" sounded like a deprecation of her paining him by her violence.

Long he talked to her soothingly, telling her of the long dread he had had that this must come to pass, and the comfort it was to him that they were together, and that she did not give way ignobly under the trial.

From that day Augusta was another woman outwardly, in reality a higher phase of her own character. Many times, when alone, after this interview with her husband, her pent-up feelings gave way in floods of tears, but never in his presence



There was little difference in her manner, excepting in the increased tenderness of her voice, when addressing Lyle.

She grew paler day by day, and she would not have acknowledged to herself how much slighter her figure became with all this anxiety. She had always ready some excuse in answer to Lyle's expressed fears for her health, and doctor found that it was useless to attempt putting a stop to the unwearying exertions which she used, or suggesting that Augusta's labours should be shared by some one else.

"You will make *yourself* ill," argued he, "and then we shall be in a pretty state with you also to be nursed."

"Never fear," answered Augusta; "I shall not be ill so long as there remains the necessity for exertion. I have no time to think of being ill."

"I believe you," answered Dr —; "but when the exertion is at an end, you will suffer for it."

Augusta looked at him deprecatingly, as if to entreat him to avoid such an allusion, and the kind old man inwardly abused himself for his stupidity, and attempted to talk cheerfully of other things.

"I am sure Mrs. Lyle bears up against it all remarkably well," observed Miss Bella Delaville to Mrs. Seymour, when talking on the subject of Henry Lyle's illness and the slight hope there was of his recovery. The speech was made in such a tone that Mrs. Seymour imagined it implied a reproach upon Augusta for the absence of outward ebullitions of grief on her part.



"Yes, poor dear girl," answered she, "she bears up bravely against it : she has a noble heart."

"I am sure it is a great advantage," remarked Miss Bella, still in the same tone, "to be able to do so. Now, I should be perfectly unfit for such a position as Augusta Lyle's ; I should be completely overcome continually, I have such very acute feelings."

"Then I fear you would be of very little use," said Mrs Seymour, bluntly ; "but I differ from you in one respect. I think that feelings show themselves more in self-devotion and self-forgetfulness than in any outward manifestation, which is, at best, but a selfish indulgence of them. We should have but few helpers and comforters, Miss Bella, if all were of your temperament."

"Oh yes !" said the lady, taking glory to herself, "I often wish I did not feel so sensibly ; the least thing melts me. It is very painful to be so sensitive, but we cannot help it, Mrs. Seymour, if we feel more strongly than others."

Mrs. Seymour saw that her previous remarks had been misapplied or unheeded, and she felt the uselessness of adding anything further, so was fain to leave Miss Bella Dellaville in the enjoyment of her own conceit.



## CHAPTER XLVIII

THE last resource ; Florence and a winter at Rome. Augusta's heart sank as she heard the doctor's advice. It seemed but the faint attempt of a dying man to struggle on a little longer.

But Lyle viewed nothing with the same sad eyes as his wife : he heard the proposal with the utmost calmness, and merely strove to soothe the agitation which poor Augusta found it impossible to conceal.

"It must be so, my dearest ; I have expected it always ; yet, had I a choice, I would rather die in my own land."

"Die !" Augusta covered her face with her hands, and leant her head upon his shoulder.

"I should have said, part with you here, amongst all our old associations. Sit down by me, Gussy, and let us calmly talk the subject over. It must be looked into the face bravely : we cannot escape it by forgetting it, dear little girl."



She sat down as he directed on a stool by him, leaning her head against his knee, while she gazed full into the fire before her, and held one of his hands within her own.

"I distressed you by my remark, Gussy," said he. "It will be very hard to part, but it is only for a little while."

She shuddered and was silent, only clasping his hand more tightly in hers.

"How false an idea men generally have of death," rejoined Lyle, as if following the train of his own thoughts aloud, "chiefly owing, I conceive, to the false associations which are given us in childhood. Every subject, in passing through the mind presents to the mind an ideal image, whether consciously or no, for it may be without our volition, or even at times without our observation. That image becomes for life associated with the idea. How does death present itself?"

Augusta shuddered again involuntarily, and Lyle put his arm round her as he continued :

"You answered me without words, Gussy. That shudder was the prejudice of childhood embodied in an act. Men speak of death as the long rest, as our last home or sleep, and many such terms, and flatter themselves in the false idea of throwing a halo of poetical language, and, as they think, feeling, around the mistake. Death is no sleep, can be no sleep to us. I am taking only the highest picture of death usually presented to us. There are those who have degraded their own thoughts to such Sadducean level as to speak as if in earnest of dwelling in the 'narrow cell,' the 'cold tomb,' and all such hackneyed terms, bordering upon infidelity. As



children, have we not seen the finger of those older and better informed than ourselves pointing downwards to the mortal grave in the churchyard, as the place to which one or other we have loved has gone, instead of upwards to those blue fields of speculation, the place we think they now inhabit, and telling of that paradise, wherever it may be, where we know they are gone?"

"Go on," said Augusta, in a low tone; "let me hear your dear voice while I yet may."

"Are not such foolish ideas mixed with our earliest dreams? Yet, *I* can never be in the narrow cell, the tomb cannot imprison *me*. The body is not I. If men could but realize their own individuality irrespective of the body, and remember that self must be an immortal essence, they would cease to talk of 'looking at the sun for the last time,' of 'exchanging this bright world for the dark confines of the tomb.' Immortal man never goes to the tomb. Who knows how far the soul may have flitted from earth by the time the perhaps forgotten body has been returned to dust? We are infidels at heart, Augusta, all of us: we preach 'dust to dust,' and deny it in practice daily. We talk a great deal of Christian doctrine, and perhaps many of us think *of* these things, but we do not think them."

"Go on," said she, again, turning her eyes upon his face, and gazing there as if it had been the face of an angel, which in expression truly it nearly approached to.

"A desperate man, before taking the fatal leap from a parapet of the suicidal bridge, argues to himself of the cool rest,



the forgetfulness of his sorrows and his sins, which he will find beneath the turbid waters of the Thames. Such argument is but a further proof of the temporary insanity which can prompt to a suicidal act, but it is an insanity which is not confined to the poor desperate alone, but travels far into human creation. Where is the coolness which can extend to the body alone, when that body by its very act is deprived of feeling? Where the rest, when the body is no longer conscious of fatigue, and the soul, the self, the man, is whirled prematurely, still sentient, still suffering, still unforgetting, into another state, where probably feeling may be more acute, remembrance more intense?"

"Yet David somewhere says, 'In death there is no remembrance of Thee; in the grave, who shall give Thee thanks?'"

"David also says, 'There is no repentance in the grave;' and another scripture has, 'As the tree falls, so shall it lie.' We are often told that our doom is fixed from the moment that we die, but we are not told that our souls are in the grave unconscious of that doom. The spirit remains in the same frame as when it left earth: regret may be, but repentance is too late to be effectual. We know there is such repentance as that of Esau; and, doubtless, the very demons so far repent, that they would change their destiny were it possible. Perhaps the soul in that transitive state may be restrained from advance in intellectual as well as moral culture, who can say?"

"But that paradise of which we have been told, and which seems distinct from heaven?" asked Augusta, as if yearning



for that spiritual information which is withheld, a yearning which pervades every immortal soul.

“Of that we know nothing,” answered Lyle, gently, “but that it is; and of such things we must not inquire, lest, ere we are conscious of our own sin, we should profanely tread upon holy ground.”

“Go on,” still said Augusta, in the same low voice.

“What more should I say?” he answered. “When we part——”

It was not she who trembled this time. Augusta still looked in his face with the same resigned and devoted expression, still pressed his hand in hers.

He ceased speaking, looked agitated, then throwing his arms around her with almost frantic love, he wept as passionately as a child, and forgot all his arguments of resignation in the arrant weakness of human nature.



## CHAPTER XLIX.

LYLE and Augusta went to Florence, and the complete change of climate, scenery, and subjects of interest, seemed to work wonders with the invalid.

The doctor had recommended cessation from work, although he had not enforced it with great rigour; but Lyle seemed to find it impossible to obey such a behest. With, of late, unwonted vigour he returned to his pencil, revelling in the art of the land, working, with all his love and strength in the employment; and Augusta's heart leaped in grateful beatings towards the God of health, as she saw, or believed she saw, the colour return to her husband's cheek, and the brightness to his eye, the flush of excitement and the brilliancy both unnatural.

Again they walked together, he giving to her the support of his arm.

One day, in one of the galleries of Florence, as Augusta stood by the side of Lyle, listening to the low tones of his



voice, as he spoke of the associations necessarily suggested by the paintings around them, her eye fell upon the figure of Arthur Vere, standing a little apart from them, looking towards Lyle with an expression of face difficult to understand, and evidently overhearing the conversation.

He did not start as he caught her eye, but bowed, and shortly afterwards disappeared.

This sudden apparition disconcerted Augusta; she had not been aware that Vere was in the neighbourhood. Lyle's face had been turned in profile towards Vere, and therefore he was not aware of the encounter, and Augusta thought it best to say nothing of her own anxiety.

It was not long before that anxiety was renewed. Seated the following day by herself, in her husband's painting-room, for Lyle had, as a most unusual occurrence, gone out alone, the door was gently opened, and Mr. Vere entered.

Augusta rose quickly to her feet, and her first impulse was to resent the impertinent intrusion on Vere's part; but his sudden appearance alarmed her, the late anxieties through which she had passed had to a degree undermined her presence of mind and firmness, and she could only look indignantly towards him, unable for a few moments to command her voice.

Vere saw her agitation, and waited as if for her to speak. Augusta continued standing, and when the first feeling of alarm was over she addressed him.

"May I ask to what I am indebted for this visit? Excuse my rudeness, but you must be aware that it cannot be agreeable to me."



"I did not expect it to be so," answered Vere. "I did not know until yesterday, when we mutually recognized each other, that you were in Florence. He is in ill-health still, I presume?"

There was no necessity to ask who was intended by the *he*, and Augusta did not pretend to misunderstand.

"We are here on account of Lyle's health," she answered.

"He is dying, I presume?" said Vere, heartlessly. And Augusta would not to him allow the pang his words caused her to be apparent, but answered as firmly as he himself had spoken :

"I believe so." She turned very pale as she said the words, but averted her face from his ; and Vere resumed :

"And what will become of you then, when he is gone?"

"God will take charge of me ; that God to whom he will commit me. I can work, if there is necessity."

"Rather visionary reliance," murmured Vere.

She had been firm as she answered him his cold-blooded question, but it had been the firmness of a moment only. Her eye caught sight of the picture upon which her husband had been occupied, and leaning her head upon her arm against the window-sill her whole frame shook with grief.

Vere approached her. "Augusta," said he, "did I not tell you you should repent having once injured me? Do you not do so at such a moment?"

She signed to him to go, but he did not obey her wishes.

"Repent having refused you?" she asked, after a pause, unable to refrain from throwing into the tone of her voice the



contempt which she felt towards him. "Do you think that at this moment I would change my position as Lyle's wife, struggling with the constant inroads of poverty as we have done for that of the companion of an infidel?"

She raised her head, and looked him full in the face, and his eye, as usual, fell before that of an honest fellow-creature.

"Who told you so?" he murmured; but she took no notice of his question, and continued,

"Do you think I would be otherwise than the death-bed attendant of him who seems as an angel, when placed in contrast to such as you?"

"Thank you," said Vere; "but your angel is dying as fast as possible: and what then?"

"I would sooner have the memory of him, and the consciousness of such an angel, laugh as you will at the term, being still mine, above, than——" She stopped.

"Than such a devil on earth," added Vere; "exactly. Well, we will not quarrel with terms; but some day, not very long hence, you will think differently."

"So you have prophesied before this, with as much reason as now. You cannot make me think differently; and for your empty threats, do you think, proud man that you are, that Heaven will listen to the wishes of one who denies the God of heaven?"

"You forget: I shall not ask Heaven to listen," retorted he.

As he spoke, Lyle entered, but Vere did not move from his position. Augusta went towards her husband as she continued speaking:



“Do you think that the darkness of all our present prospects would make me hesitate for a moment, had I the power of recalling the past? When evil comes upon us, we are sharing it together, and I would rather rejoice that in my life with him, short as has been the time given us, I have had opportunities of showing him I can be happy, not alone when the sun shines brightly, but through clouds and darkness, in his love.”

Vere smiled his usual smile when annoyed, and turned to Henry Lyle.

“You may feel surprised, sir, at finding me here; I am quite ready to give you an explanation of my conduct, and should, indeed, feel obliged if you will accompany me into the street, as I would wish to speak to yourself.”

“I am surprised only in so far as I did not know you to be in Florence,” answered Lyle; and nodding his head towards Augusta he left the room with Vere. Perhaps, had Augusta been less confident in the integrity of her Lyle, she might have felt alarmed at the ominous words used by Vere. She perfectly well understood their significance, but not a doubt or fear passed through her mind as the two men, we were about to write the *two gentlemen*, left the room together.



## CHAPTER L.

"Now, sir," said Vere, as he and Lyle stood on the pavement outside the lodgings of the latter, "I have a charge against you, which, being a true one, I presume *your principles* will scarcely allow you to refute. I believe I am indebted to you for the public opposition and contradiction which I for some months sustained."

"I really do not know to what you allude," answered Lyle. "Opposed to you I have always been in principle, I am aware; but never personally, I believe. Will you explain yourself more fully?"

Vere looked quickly in the face of Lyle. There was no lie in those clear eyes; and perhaps he, such an adept in acting himself, was as good a judge of the utter absence of it in another, as any. In this case he saw himself misunderstood, and said, by way of explanation,

"I am speaking of those pamphlets of yours, Mr. Lyle.



Need I tell you that the contradictions, or refutations, as I suppose you would call them, were directed against myself?"

"Are you, then, the author of those papers?" asked Lyle, with so strange a look of interest at his companion, that even Vere started.

"I am," said he; "I am not ashamed to own my principles."

"Or want of principle," said Lyle, sadly; "you were ashamed, and justly so, to own yourself the author at the time you published them."

"It would not have been wise to do so: that was my only reason; but why should I continue such a concealment? I have no object now in doing so. I hope I have not, irremediably shocked your propriety by my confession," added he, laughing shortly.

"I was aware," said Lyle, quickly, "that your principles were rather unfixed; but I scarcely can credit your being the author of *such* pamphlets. God help you, Vere!"

"I am obliged to you, sir, for the wish," said the other, sarcastically, "although I do not say amen to it."

"You will one day say amen to it; not long hence, I hope: I trust, before it is too late."

"Too late for what? I do not fear, Lyle; I have made my own future."

"So you think; but I am afraid you will find the future has been made for you, without consulting you or your private opinions. Things do not fall out as we anticipate, even in every-day life: do they?"



Vere thought of the future he had once planned, and of its being overthrown so unexpectedly, and influencing his whole subsequent life as it had done, and he writhed under Lyle's words. He glanced at his companion's face with undisguised ferocity, but there was no deeper meaning there than the sense of the remark implied; and he said, suppressing his voice as he spoke, so that the passers-by should not hear,

"According to the Eternity which such as you believe in. I live for Time, as all who think honestly must do."

"It must be a wretched life, then," said Lyle, musingly.

"Not so miserable as you think," said Vere, who, in the interest of the subject, was forgetting his angry feeling towards his opponent. "It is thought makes misery. Without thought, life were a paradise. It is you reflective men should be unhappy."

"How you condemn your own doctrine, Vere, in saying that thought makes misery. Thought of what? not your own philosophy, but the probable or even possible fallacy of it."

"I did not intend what you say, at all," answered Vere, quickly. "You think for me."

"You are not a man," pursued Lyle, "to find your pleasure in merely sensual gratification. You, if any man does, know the pleasures of intellect. You say thought makes misery: you must, then, be a miserable man."

"Do you not admit the making a slave instead of a master of the intellect?" said Vere.

"I admit the possibility of such a thing partially, but only partially. You know it cannot be, Vere."



"I do not know it : in fact, I question if we *know* anything, excepting our own present existence. Neither do you. I am surprised at you, Lyle."

"For what?" asked the other.

"That you should be so credulous, and so easily led. You are a man in mind, when you will ; yet you receive heterodox opinions with the unquestioning spirit of a child."

"I do not allow the word heterodox with regard to my religious opinions ; but you have exactly hit upon what should be the case, in your latter observation. Except we become as children we cannot receive the kingdom of God. It is not man's intellect which is appealed to in revelation, but his heart."

"That is insulting to man's intellect, you must allow," said Vere.

"Perhaps a rebuff as to his superior understanding would do no man harm. We are apt, Vere, to think our own intellects too all-sufficient ; and depend upon it, the day will come, whether we are converted or no, when we shall each find his human intellect a broken reed to lean upon. Even yourself, Vere, exalted as the powers of your mind are, and able as you esteem yourself to stand alone, will some day be as a child in weakness. God grant that it may be the humble and teachable spirit of a child of God you will assume !"

"You speak as if you judged your words prophetic," said Vere, sarcastically, and looking haughty as Lucifer. "I am happy to say I have no such anticipation ; and I think, sir, you assume a position which is uncalled for, that of Scripture-



lecturer to my conscience," he continued, getting angry.

"I have assumed no position, Vere; my remarks were consequent upon your own; and even the personal application I made to yourself might be taken in return for yours to me, I think."

"Perhaps so. Well, I allow no man to stand in the place of adviser to me, and I am very well satisfied with my own prospects for the future, Mr. Lyle."

Lyle looked Vere full in the face, surprised at the change in his manner, for the latter could not any longer keep his temper. The interest of the passing conversation had diverted his thoughts from the object of his interview with Lyle; but now, flushing deep crimson, he said, in a hurried and impetuous voice,

"But we are only wasting time in this discussion; my purpose was otherwise with you, sir, than argument. Will you give me satisfaction for your interference in my affairs, or is it *against your principles* to do so?" asked he, sneeringly.

Lyle looked inquiringly in his face, but did not answer.

"Will you give me a meeting, sir?" said Vere, between his teeth.

"No," answered the other.

Vere laughed sarcastically. "I always find," said he, "that principles are a capital shelter for a coward."

"I should deserve the name which you falsely give," said Lyle, calmly, but flushing to the temples, "did I, for the fear of man, forsake my principles. I do not even understand upon what plea you demand a meeting. I, or any man, has a right



to answer pamphlets publicly given out. Although, had I been aware of their author, it would not in any way have altered my conduct, yet even your part in them I was ignorant of. Your proposal under any circumstances is absurd, under existing ones extremely so."

"Then you decline listening to it?" asked Vere.

"Certainly I do," answered Lyle.

The other sneered, and raising his hat, left him.

Lyle returned into the house, but it was a long time before he could regain composure. The galling word which Vere had used would recur continually, and, although alone, bring a blush to his face, however uncalled for and undeserved.



## CHAPTER LI.

“THOUGHT makes misery!” said Lyle, as if musing upon the sentence spoken by Vere. “Can it be so? Is a child, whom we consider so pre-eminently happy, only so from thoughtlessness?”

Gussy came and sat down close by him, and answered in words the current of his thoughts.

“And yet I have heard it said that a philosopher must be capable of greater happiness than an uneducated man, having his mind more expanded; although a clown feels happiness to the utmost of his power.”

“And therein a clown must be happier than a philosopher, for the latter can place no limit to his aspirations after happiness. Happiness must consist in enough, and as an unsophisticated man is content with bacon and beans, and having sat down to an inordinate feast of such, feels as if he had placed his foot in his Elysium, a clown is happy. A philosopher



finds nothing in this world to give him happiness. All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

"Yet," said Augusta, "a philosopher has the aspiration after a future state, the bliss of which he can mentally realize better than the other."

"A Christian has, Gussy, whether he be philosopher or clown. I was arguing merely of present contentment. Anticipative happiness, however, has always mingled with it a sickening longing, which is very near akin to weariness."

"Some say anticipation is better than reality."

"In the things of this world it may be, Augusta; for men increase their ideas by long dwelling upon them. The natural poetry of the human mind, as some French author says, exaggerates an idea almost unconsciously."

"I have always thought," resumed Augusta, after a pause, "that the idea of children's happiness is exaggerated. I know, from my own recollection, that I was intensely miserable as a child at every the smallest disappointment."

"But you were intensely happy at every little gratification, and your joys overweighed your griefs."

"Never so happy as I have been since I ceased to be a child, Henry. Never so happy as since I have known you," she said. "It seems to me as if I did not formerly know how much happiness I was capable of feeling. I merely existed. I did not even know the pleasure of feeling myself an intellectual being. Are not you happy, dear Henry?" she presently asked, as he continued looking at her attentively.

"Am I happy?" he answered; "but I ought not to hesitate



or even to require to ask myself the question. A child does not demur if asked if he is happy."

"You appear to think a child a criterion of every essential feeling," observed Augusta.

"Of every unsophisticated feeling it is; of every pure feeling it is a criterion; and as we advance in virtue, we come more nearly to the docile and unworldly spirit of a child. Is it not so?"

"Of course it is, dear Henry. It is enough for me that you say so, whatever it might be."

"That should not be, though, Augusta; you should prove all things and all opinions for yourself. Take nothing upon trust but revelation in such matters as these we speak of."

"I mean that, in my opinion, you cannot say wrong."

"Would you then be content to have no freedom of thought?"

"I would be content that my thoughts should be but a transcript of your own. You first taught me to think, and I doubt if I could think at all but in the line previously drawn by you."

"But supposing I should lead you astray, Augusta?"

"You could not," said she, confidently. "I have no fear of that; your principles are too high and too firmly fixed for that."

"But again, supposing," said Lyle, looking at her attentively, and with a slight flush.

Augusta bent her head upon his hand, saying,

"I shall have the memory of your counsel, my darling. I



shall still hear your voice repeating the lessons which love has engraven on my heart. Even then, you cannot lead me wrong."

"How you flatter me, Gussy," said Henry Lyle, smiling. "You will make me conceited, and you know that after pride comes a fall. Besides, my judgment might fail: the best-meaning act foolishly at times from want of judgment."

"I have no fear of that, either," said she, passing her hand fondly over his hair, and smoothing it off his magnificent forehead.

"Have you any more compliments to pay me, Gussy? I have a very large organ of self-esteem, as you may perceive, and can take in a great deal of flattery. Cannot you tell me something else pleasant?"



## CHAPTER LII.

LATE that night, Lyle walked out into the streets. He had no right, with his bad cough and ill health, to be there at that time, but prudence was not one of his qualities in self matters, and it did not occur to him that he was acting unwisely, although Augusta was anxiously looking out for his return, blaming herself that she had not warned him against staying out late.

He was buried in thought, and he sauntered away from the general thoroughfares until he got into by-ways and alleys, such as the city abounds in. As he neared a corner which turned into a long lane of houses, almost unlighted, he heard an exclamation of savage delight, and the next moment, a little in front of him, he perceived two men. The one was tall and erect, made more so by the start of surprise which he had just given, while the other crouched before him like a beast about to spring.

“Ah, I have found you at length, have I?” said the latter



who was dressed in a blouse and cap, and spoke in Norman patois. "I have been seeking for you many years, and now——now——"

He seemed to cease speaking from the excitement of his mind having deprived him of words, and Lyle advanced towards them unperceived, feeling alarmed at the menacing tone the man had used. The whole attention of each seemed concentrated by the other, and, as they stood thus, like two animals at bay, their observer recognized in the man assaulted, Arthur Vere.

Vere did not speak, but his lips were pale with agitation, his eyes fell to the ground before those of his opponent, and he made an effort unsuccessfully more than once to address him.

"Villain!" said the other, "you dare not meet the eye of *her* brother: you are powerless, silenced in the presence of her avenger." And almost shrieking the name of "Pauline Deschamps," the man sprang towards Vere with a knife raised in his hand.

But the hand was caught by Lyle, and the fury of the Norman was turned upon him. Vere seemed paralyzed by the meeting and the suddenness of the interference, and gazed stupidly at the two as they struggled together.

It was not for long that the struggle continued. Lyle received the knife in his left side, for Deschamps was not master of himself, until, aware of what he had done, the man was struck with remorse, and exclaimed:

"I did not mean that: why did you come between us? I would not have injured you; it was against him only I was armed."



He bent down over Henry Lyle as he spoke, for Lyle had been forced on his knee, and was bleeding profusely. Horrified at seeing the blood, Deschamps commenced wiping it away with his blouse, and Vere approached.

“Out of my sight!” exclaimed the Norman. “You are safe: I am not fit for a murderer, I see. I do not like the sight of blood. You may thank God and your countryman here for your life. Go: leave me with this brave man; do not you touch him; you are a villain.”

Vere, however, came nearer, and addressed Lyle.

“I hope sir,” said he, “that you will give me another opportunity more fitting than the present of thanking you for your prompt and courageous interference. I owe my life to your intervention. I am indeed distressed that you should have received personal injury in my defence. May I not assist you to your house?”

Deschamps, who partially understood the preceding speech, here interfered, declaring that he would take the gentleman to his home, and wanted no assistance from such as Vere. The latter murmured some threat against the man who chose to thwart him, in which an allusion to justice was made; but Deschamps boldly confronted him with a look as if it required very little to call the knife into play again, and answered,

“You dare not, Vere—you dare not.”

“I am most happy to have been of any service,” said Lyle, in a voice so altered by pain that Vere did not recognize it.

“I have no doubt that my friend here will take care of me.”

“Friend!” echoed Deschamps, in a tone of sympathy.

They were not far from a cab-stand, and Vere went to it and



hailed one, while Deschamps remained with Lyle, filling up the time with regrets for what had happened, and assurances of the unintentional part he himself had taken in it.

Notwithstanding Deschamps' dislike to his assistance, Vere waited until he had seen Lyle placed in the cab, and inquiring of Deschamps the address, was told by the Norman to mind his own affairs.

The motion of the carriage set the wound bleeding again, to the great distress of Lyle's companion.

By the time the two arrived at the lodgings Augusta was almost distracted with anxiety, an alarm which was not allayed by seeing her husband supported into the house by a strange man, and vainly striving to conceal the faintness which nearly overcame him. For some hours she asked no questions, exerting herself only to facilitate his recovery by attending to the orders of the doctor, and suffering silently in every change of Lyle's face.

When Augusta inquired the particulars of Lyle's accident, he detailed to her the facts exactly as they had occurred, but did not mention that it was Arthur Vere whom he had rescued. Perhaps he dreaded a self-satisfied consciousness that he had been heaping coals of fire upon his enemy's head.

Vere did not remember until some time afterwards that he was unaware of his preserver's name, and the following day, when, in real gratitude, he called at the principal hotels in the town, inquiring for such a person, he could hear of no English gentleman who had been wounded on the previous night, and was obliged to leave Florence without being able to express his thanks.



## CHAPTER LIII.

LET us go home, my love: it is useless struggling any longer. I would sooner die in my own land; and I could not leave you, my Augusta, amongst strangers."

So Lyle and Augusta came back to England to spend his few remaining months or weeks at his earthly home, before he went Home for ever.

Willy Benson quickly discovered their return. On the same evening of their arrival in town the lad was at their lodgings, having guessed their being there no one knew how, with a large bouquet of flowers, which he had got no one knew where. He cried heartily at seeing Mr. Lyle looking so ill; for he was no scholar of the feelings, and went back to the court and to Benson's abode with miserable tales of regret that Henry Lyle was dying.

"It is always the way," observed Dick Carter, in reply to Willy's remarks upon the subject, more conspicuous for kind-



ness than judgment—"it is always the way: those which are the most wanted are the ones taken. Mr. Lyle will be a loss to many here, I know; but it is no use crying about it, Willy, my man. Such things must be."

Notwithstanding, Dick Carter cried over it himself when he was alone, but he excused himself, on the plea that it was Mrs. Lyle he pitied, for who would look after her, poor little thing, when Lyle was gone?

The poor always express their sympathy and interest by making presents, and a very effectual and beautiful way of doing so it is; and so Dick Carter, on the following day, went to see the Lyles with an offering of flowers and fruit.

Augusta was startled at the sight of the gift, for she knew that the man must have gone to some expense for it, and she showed hesitation in her manner of accepting it, which, had she reflected a moment, she would have avoided.

The man repeated his regret at finding Mr. Lyle so ill, and again offered the flowers and fruit.

"My dear Carter, I scarcely like to take it from you."

The mason glanced towards Lyle, and coloured.

"I am sure it is little enough, ma'am," said he; "anything I could offer you would be poor indeed, when I think of all that he has done for me."

Henry Lyle stretched out his hand to the man, and Dick Carter shuffled out of the room, to avoid further remarks upon his presents.

Lyle did not speak for a few moments after his friend had left, but Augusta saw that his eyes filled with tears as he



played with the flowers, and stooped over them to examine them more closely.

“Are they not beautiful?” she asked, wishing to break the silence.

“What have I ever done for that man, that he should express gratitude towards me?” exclaimed Lyle; “nothing that I can remember—nothing. Oh! Gussy, they who complain of the world’s ingratitude speak of that which they know not. There is more gratitude in the world than kind actions to bring it forth, I sometimes think.”

“Perhaps those who talk of the world’s ingratitude are those who overrate their own actions. There are who under-rate them, Harry, darling.”

“I can assure, you Augusta,” continued Lyle, “that I have very often in life had to exclaim, as I did just now, what have I done to deserve these thanks? I feel guilty towards Richard Carter, now, that his acknowledgments should so far outweigh his obligations; but he has his reward in the virtue of the feeling.”

Augusta did not reply that Henry Lyle had incurred the gratitude of the poor who knew him, by his kind sympathy with their distresses, his affectionate words, and brotherly interest, although he had been unable very tangibly to assist them in every instance; yet she thought it, though she forbore to put an end to the childish wonder which came so becomingly from the unworldly heart of her husband.



## CHAPTER LIV.

MRS. VERE died.

Her son had been her life, and without him she was nothing.

For days and weeks she had looked forward to the prospect of some word from him ; but hope deferred made fearful work, as days and weeks had passed and not a line arrived. The temple of her idol being empty, reft of its only treasure, itself fell into ruins and decay. Her death was sudden at the last : one day she became seriously ill ; the next the physician was alarmed and wrote to Vere, on the chance of finding him, addressing to the Poste Restante, at Florence—for the newspapers had mentioned he was there—entreating him, if he wished to see his mother, to return ; and the third day evening he wrote again, to tell him all in this world was over.

Mrs. Seymour was summoned one morning suddenly to wait upon Mrs. Vere, for on her death-bed the poor lady scarcely knew where to turn for sympathy, and the remembrance of the



kindness, unasked-for and unfeigned, which Mrs. Seymour had always shown, came as a ray of hope to the heart of Mrs. Vere.

It was painful to see the earnestness with which the poor woman watched for the arrival of her son, for she could not think otherwise than that he would come, for she had written to him so often that she longed to see him, that she believed nothing of those things they said against him: he was to her still her dear, beautiful, talented Arthur—he would surely come and answer her in person, as he had not written. In the intervals of her pain, for she was dying of an epidemic to which she had rashly exposed herself, and which took frightful hold upon her in her then weak state, she always asked if he were come, and Mrs. Seymour's heart ached as she each time answered, "Not yet."

"He will be here soon," murmured Mrs. Vere; "let me know as soon as he arrives." And forgetting her own illness, and all but her affection for him, she would continue in a half-conscious manner, "I must see that everything is ready for him—he would not like to find his rooms in disorder; I will not listen to anything against him—you are quite wrong."

On the third day she lay quite still, listening to every noise; and Mrs. Seymour sat beside her, almost beginning to expect Arthur's arrival through the earnestness with which Mrs. Vere looked for it. The dying woman had been silent for some time, and Mrs. Seymour had hoped that she was turning her thoughts to other and more important things, as she felt her last hour approaching. Many times had her friend desired to



read to her, and Mrs. Vere would assent, and for a moment listen, but then would interrupt, and start up in the bed, exclaiming, "I think I heard *his* footstep!—he is here, is he not?" Then finding herself deceived, she would sink back on the pillow with a sigh, and be apparently lost in thought of her son. Arthur had been his mother's god: the idol still kept its place in her dying hour.

She had been deliriously raving—always of *him*—during the morning, but now she was sensible and calm.

"Mrs. Seymour," said she, "turning to her friend, "do they say that I am dying?" And she shuddered. Mrs. Seymour bowed her head, and Mrs. Vere closed her eyes and lay back upon the pillow.

"Oh, why does he not come?" she murmured. "Will he come to me? Do you think he will come?"

"I hope so, dear," said Mrs. Seymour. "Try to think of other things: try to think of eternal things."

"Mrs. Vere did not speak again for some time, and when the doctor came in he pronounced her very much weaker. He was expecting another physician, and looked out anxiously for his arrival; and Mrs. Seymour perceived, by his nervous manner, that he feared an almost immediate change.

She felt very wretched as she looked at her friend—so thoughtlessly she had lived, and so thoughtlessly she seemed to die—and she could alone pray that the seriousness which now pervaded the features of Mrs. Vere might be through the realization of her position.

Mrs. Vere's eyes were closed as the other watched her, and



while she did so there was a muffled knock at the hall-door.

Mrs. Vere started and listened: there was a footstep on the stairs so soft as to be almost undistinguishable, and she raised herself slightly in the bed, and as the footstep came near her chamber she trembled with expectation.

The doctor opened the door, for he knew who it was coming, and, with a shriek, Mrs. Vere sprang almost out of the bed, and as the other physician came near to the side, she flung herself forward towards him—and died, thinking it was her son.

His miniature was found around her neck, his hair in a locket on her bosom, and Mrs. Seymour would not let them be removed, but buried the picture and memorial of her darling with her.

One day Vere had been walking in the streets of Rome many hours. He was restless, anxious, and uncomfortable. Was it strange he should be so? He had lived a life of sin, and perhaps the tormenting thoughts which harassed him might be the commencement of retribution. He was dissatisfied; but that he always had been. He had no inward peace, and such a man cannot be quiet when alone. Yet he had all that day traversed the streets alone; he had avoided others if he met them. A dull cloud of the future seemed to hang before his brows; but, strangely, he courted rather than avoided it. The darkness came on suddenly, and objects were indistinct almost before the idea of sun was over; but still Vere walked about the streets of Rome, and did not turn towards his temporary home. Once he paused, and leant



against the pillar of a porch. What would a man do in such a case, when out upon a dark but lovely night, but look up to the skies above him, as if to pierce through the unfathomable depth? and an awful but glad feeling would come over him, that Nature is so sublime, and God so good!

Vere did not do so. If he glanced towards heaven, his eyes were quickly withdrawn again. To him the skies could have no beauty, because for him no God was there. It was a characteristic in him that his eyes were always downwards. Eyes are the glossary of the heart, if not of the mind.

There was something lay upon a door-step near to where he stood, so small it might have been a bundle, or a little dog curled up; it was shaded by the pillar of the porch, and all passed it without observation. Yet when Vere saw it, he moved towards the spot, and looked at it attentively. He took two or three more steps, yet could not refrain from turning round to look again at the little thing as it lay, and then he stopped and approached close to it, to examine what it was. At the same moment, the little bundle moved and started up, and gazed anxiously about from side to side. "Mamma!" called the child. Then, seeing Vere, it changed its cry, and running up to him in terror, said, "Oh, take me home, papa!"

There is no man, there can be no man, however hardened against good, which in all respects Vere was not, who could deliberately spurn a child. He stooped down towards it and examined its face. It was a truly English child, which its words had shown, with large blue eyes and a quantity of fair



curling hair. To Vere's astonishment, it was well dressed, and seemed to have wandered away from home and fallen asleep upon the door-step, while the darkness of evening came on suddenly and unperceived. The child seemed frightened when it saw that Vere was not its father, and began to sob.

"I will take you home," said he, in a kind tone; "do you think you can show me the way?"

"Oh yes, I know where mamma lives; will you take me please?" And the child held out its little hand to Vere. It seemed such a morsel of a thing to be walking at that time of night, with its head and neck and arms uncovered, and Vere stopped and asked if he should carry it.

"Yes, please," said the child, "you walk so fast."

"What is your name?" asked he, for he did not know whether it was a boy or a girl.

"Augusta," answered the child.

For a moment Vere stood it upon the pavement again and sighed, but it was only for a moment; he again took her up in his arms, and wrapped his great-coat round her, trusting to her to direct him where to go.

"What is your name?" said Augusta, who, like all children, became talkative directly her fears were quieted.

Vere told her. There seemed to be something attractive in Vere to the child's fancy; perhaps it was his outward beauty, or perhaps it was a good angel speaking through the baby's innocent voice. She talked incessantly, running on, scarcely waiting a moment for an answer.

"Look at the stars!" said Augusta, turning her blue eyes



up to heaven. "Look also, Arthur. Mamma says the stars should make us think of God; I think of God when I see the stars. Do you? Do you think the stars can see us and tell God what we do when it is dark? But God can see without the stars telling Him, cannot He?"

Vere gave no answer.

"Do you love God, Arthur? It must be very sorrowful not to love Him, for God loves us, does He not?"

Still Vere did not reply.

"The devil does not love God, I suppose, does he, Arthur?"

"No, child, no."

Vere had disputed on religion, had argued with his opposers, and thought his sophistries came off triumphant; but now he had no answer ready for this little child. He felt abashed and guilty before a baby.

The child continued as if the words were taught it, whilst every sentence fixed itself in Vere's memory, as the low, gentle notes of its voice gave utterance to them.

"I have not said my prayers yet. Oh! I hope mamma will not be sorry I am out; I hope God will not be sorry I have not said my prayers. You are a kind man," stroking his face with her hand, "to take me home. I think you must love God. I shall say my prayers for you, Arthur, shall I?"

Almost involuntarily, before he was aware of it, Vere had said "Yes."

At that moment they rounded the corner of the street, and Augusta called out, delighted, that they were near her home. The hall-door of the house was open, the passages lighted, and



the whole household in a state of confusion, when, ringing at the bell, half a dozen people rushed to the door.

“Mamma!” said the child, almost springing out of Vere’s arms. And the mother pressed it to her heart.

We will not relate particularly what was all told to Vere—the loss of the child—the agony and suspense whilst looking for it. The father was still out in search of it. Augusta’s mother loaded Vere with thanks, and wished him to remain until her husband returned; but he declined, under the plea of its being already late, saying that he was happy in being the means of restoring the child to its mother; and what he said, he felt sincerely.

“You are not going away,” said little Augusta, coaxingly; “no, stay with me and mamma.” But Vere rose, and told her he must go. The child had climbed upon a chair to reach up to him, and, as he turned round to wish her good night, she put her little fat arms round his neck and kissed him innocently.

“Good night, Arthur; God bless you.”

This is a common saying in almost everybody’s mouth, old and young, but it was long since it had been used to Vere, and he had a strange feeling in his bosom as he lifted Augusta in his arms, and kissed her oftener and more frequently than would be usual in a stranger.

It was now late, and he walked quickly to his hotel, unable to get rid of the child’s words, which rang in his ears. The accidental incident of her name had awakened in Vere’s heart all the old feelings which he had striven to crush, and his



heart itself was going back to the old influence. Again Augusta Leigh was telling him, in her unflinching way, that he was wrong, and looking all the while so gently at him, that she made him, at times, almost honest against his own worse nature.



## CHAPTER LV.

To his hotel he returned, and sat down alone in the public room. Alone indeed, wretchedly alone, as he had been through life. There were several others present, speaking in different languages, some arguing on common subjects of interest, waiters were hurrying in and out, politics being discussed; but Vere heeded nothing. He was in bodily pain: he had been so often lately, but of that he was unaware now.

"I say, my good fellow, are not you going to recognize me?" said a voice near to him, which was not unfamiliar.

Arthur Vere looked up. There was a dreaminess about the room and the voice—an unreality; but this must be shaken off. And with an effort, never yet unsuccessfully made by him, he crushed down the mental spectre, and roused himself to the fact that Sir William S—— was by his chair, and was addressing him.

"Well! resumed the baronet, as Vere raised his eyes quickly to his face, "you have been wool-gathering, I fancy."



"Something like it," the other answered. "What brings you here? When did you leave London? Where do you intend going?"

"I came here for amusement," answered Sir William S——. "I left London a week since, and I am going anywhere or nowhere, as inclination prompts me."

"And what is the news?" asked Vere, making another effort to rouse himself from private thoughts.

"Not much general news; at least, no more than what you know. I say, Vere, they are handling you pretty roughly in town."

"How do you mean?"

"Why everybody knows who wrote certain things he ought not to have written, and everybody is, consequently, shocked. It is the fashion to be shocked, and you are no longer the Vere you used to be. Even your staunch friends, those two fools of Delavilles, shake their heads and groan."

"And B——, of course."

"B—— is a very good fellow," said Sir William S——. "He will not be puffed and lionised in your room. He expressed himself to me as very much annoyed at your having acted so rashly. Really, Vere, begging your pardon, you have been a great fool."

"Perhaps so, in the opinion of those who care what the world thinks," answered Vere, carelessly; but I have the pleasure of knowing that other people are greater fools still."

"I fear though, my good fellow, that you have lost public opinion."



"Public opinion!" echoed Vere, contemptuously. "I made my name myself, and I can make it again. Public opinion I know the worth of."

Sir William S—— gave a half-whistle, which might have been interpreted into an expression of dissent, doubt, or impatience; and remarked after a pause,

"That poor young Lyle is dying very fast, it seems."

Vere started. He was well aware of the fact, we know; but the remark touched an unpleasant train of thought.

"Did not you know it?" said Sir William.

"Yes, yes," said Vere, "of course. I saw him before he left Florence."

Sir William S—— was dull at perceiving that the conversation was obnoxious to his companion, and he resumed:

"It is a great pity. By-the-by, there is one circumstance rather unaccountable. It seems that he was doing very well, and they were intending to go on to Rome, when Lyle was half murdered one night in the streets of Florence. What on earth could he have been about! Some Quixotism, perhaps. He is a strange fellow."

"It could not have been he; it was not his voice; impossible it was he," said Vere, excitedly.

"Who? What are you talking of?" asked Sir William S——.

"Oh, nothing, nothing," said the other. "I am overtired, and will wish you good night. I am afraid I am but dull company." And he rose from his seat wearily.

"Why, Vere, my good man!" said Sir William, "I should



not know you for the same person. You are quite changed."

He spoke thoughtlessly, but the words, as almost all words now, struck upon Vere's newly-recovered conscience.

"Am I?" said he, with bitterness; and then added, in a lower voice, "I would I were!—would I were anything but what I am!"

"What do you say? I do not understand you."

"I must leave you now, Sir William. Good night: you must excuse me."

At the same moment one of the attendants handed him two or three letters. They were from England, and had black borders.

"No bad news, I trust," ejaculated Sir William S——, as Vere opened and read them one after the other, and crushed them into his pocket. He accompanied the question by a look of curious inquiry, as if waiting for an answer.

"My mother!" said Vere, in explanation.

"Not—eh?" again inquired Sir William, avoiding the objectionable word.

"Dead!" said Arthur Vere, shortly.

Sir William S—— looked correctly for the occasion, and gave forth the little notes of commiseration which are well imitated by an angry squirrel, but which we hardly know how to spell: "Tch—tch—tch!"

The baronet would have liked to have asked particulars, but he felt that his companion was in no humour for standing inquisitive questioning, and he wisely forbore.

Vere did not, as he had said, go to his own room. He left



the hotel, and was not seen again that night. He showed no outward emotion at the news which he had received, but it was the last stroke required to send conviction home to his conscience.

It was not the sudden news of any death which could have made Vere stop short in his career of sin. The work had been insensibly going on for some time past, and all the events and reflections of that day and night had served to bring to a crisis that which had been growing into a persuasion, and to shake for ever all the false principles by which he had surrounded himself.

Vere had slighted his mother, and returned all her devoted love with indifference; but when the sudden tidings of her death were sent him, a thick cloud of all his sins against her rose before his mind, and the remembrance of her unwearied love struck home to his own heart. The most callous must feel such things when those they have injured are no more. Love is not wasted: Vere was not callous; he warped his feelings, but could not destroy them. What passed through his mind the few days following the receipt of the doctor's letter, who can tell?

But what should he do? He had no object in life: he was alone, quite alone; and it was best for him to be so; for he could not, when alone, drive away reproachful and accusing thoughts which rose against him. Yet he did not now, as heretofore, shun solitude; although, at times, his conscience drove him almost to frenzy. Oh, the way of transgressors is hard,—which they will one day feel, however long they may



drive away the conviction. Vere was convicted by his own conscience, which seemed to have gained giant strength by the long repose it had enjoyed. Thank God we have a conscience! And thank God that conscience will not always be put to sleep, but will come down upon us sooner or later, sweeping all false reasoning before it. Let us take heed that we refuse not it that speaketh, for "he that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly come to destruction, and that without remedy."

Sir William S—— wrote thus to Mr. B——, with whom he kept up a lively correspondence :

"Who do you think I met yesterday? I did not know he was in Rome. Arthur Vere! That is to say, the man who was once Arthur Vere. I never saw a fellow so changed. I cannot think what has come over him. He has lost a great deal of his good looks, although gaining in what the D——s would call *interesting*. He is a complete wreck.

"I could not gain from him any of his plans, he was so taciturn and irritable, and he expressed no interest in home matters. It is a fortunate thing, as it turns out, that his mother is gone; for, upon my honour, I believe he now will not be long before he follows her. Well, well, we see great changes. And how goes on your book? I heard a capital piece of scandal the other day, which I will repeat to your profit, &c., &c."



## CHAPTER LVI

“MY dear Sir William, who would have thought of meeting with you? This is indeed charming. And when did you return to England? And what have you been doing abroad? And what is the news? Come, tell me everything.”

So said Miss Delaville the elder, as she encountered Sir William S—— at the entrance of Swan and Edgar’s whither she was entering, and from whence Sir William was about to make his exit.

“Come back with me, and tell all about it; but I forgot, you horrid men detest shopping, and you will be laughing at me if I am particular.”

Sir William S—— assured the lady that shopping was his favourite pastime, especially when it was of a prolonged character; and then prepared to answer the numerous questions which had been put to him already.

“And that wretch Vere, you saw him at Rome, did you



not?" said Miss Delaville, when all her previous demands had been satisfied.

"I saw that *wretch* Vere," answered Sir William S——, "but only once, and for a short time. He is much altered."

"Altered!" exclaimed the lady. "How? In what way?"

"Why, he seemed to me quite broken up. I do not know what is become of him now. I suspect there is something very wrong there."

The lady expressed being shocked by her countenance, and even forgot to look at the "articles" which the shopman was showing to her.

"I could not help being struck by the change in his face," said Sir William S——, gravely. "Do you remember that, at times, a very odd look used to come over him?"

"I always thought he was a most *interesting* man," said Miss Delaville, with pathos.

"But I mean when he was quiet; he had an expression of sadness, which, I suppose, you ladies, by-the-by, would call *interesting*; very unlike his usual haughty look."

"Oh, I know so well what you mean," said Miss Delaville, enthusiastically, "that sweet expression."

"Well, he had that very look all the while I spoke to him; I was really quite distressed to see him so down, poor fellow; I tried to cheer him up, and told him all the news of home, but they did not appear to interest him much."

"Dear, dear!" said Miss Delaville, in a plaintive voice. "No," turning to the shopman, and still in the same tone, "I don't think that will do; I prefer a paler shade of pink;" to



Sir William S—— : “ deep colours are so *very trying*. I had always a great regard for Mr. Vere, really I had. What a very charming man Mr. B—— is, but so shy: I find it difficult to get him to come to us at all.”

“ What has become of Lyle, whom I used to meet at your house ?” inquired Sir William.

“ Really, I have not heard of him for a long time ; it is very neglectful of me ; I am quite glad, my dear Sir William, that you have reminded me. I will go to-morrow and inquire how he is. I have always admired Henry Lyle, of all people ; so very talented, and really a most estimable man.”

It was in consequence of the foregoing remarks that on the following day Augusta was surprised at hearing the name of Miss Delaville, as requesting to see her.

It was a long time since those ladies, once so enthusiastic in their affection towards her, had expressed any interest in her welfare. They had been engrossed with newer and more cheerful topics than the gradually-dying Henry Lyle and his distressed wife.

Augusta, as she rose, repeated the name of Miss Delaville to her husband, and inquired if she should be admitted.

Lyle hesitated for a moment, but then answered,

“ If she wishes it, Gussy, I do not mind seeing her. She has sometimes expressed great kindness towards you : yes, ask her to come in.”

Augusta sought her visitor, and after telling her of Lyle's state, asked if she would wish to see him.

“ Oh, if I should not disturb him, my dearest Augusta, I



should so like to see him ; it is long since I have, but really there are so many things to be attended to, and my occupations are such——”

Augusta led the way up stairs as Miss Delaville thus added excuses for her neglect, and opened the door of the room where was Henry Lyle.

Miss Delaville felt dreadfully shocked when she saw him ; she was scarcely prepared for the change which a protracted illness had stamped on his face, but she thought at the same time that he looked very interesting, with the bright feverish colour in his cheeks, and his brilliant and unnaturally large eyes ; and when she had sufficiently collected her faculties to address him, it was in words of compliment.

“ You look very picturesque, I am sure, Mr. Lyle, with that magnificent beard and moustaches. Augusta, you should make him paint his own portrait when he gets well again : it would be charming.”

Henry Lyle smiled as he answered,

“ Gussy will never have the portrait, Miss Delaville, if I am to paint it, for I shall never paint again on earth ; I am dying very fast.”

“ Oh no, no !” exclaimed the lady ; “ pray do not think so : indeed you are not.”

“ Indeed I am,” said Lyle, gently.

“ Augusta, you should not let him mope himself with such fancies.” said the visitor, turning towards Mrs. Lyle.

Augusta quietly shook her head, but she gave no answer, and Lyle resumed :



“Do you think I mope myself, Miss Delaville?” What would it avail me to shut my eyes to what are facts? I know that I must die before long: is it not better to meet death bravely, as I can? It is only habit can accustom us to look at it calmly, for death is horrid always to human nature: our very instinct is against it.”

“Horrid, indeed!” murmured Miss Delaville, shudderingly, and speaking the honest thought of her heart at the time.

“I am speaking of Death itself, as coming to the body, without alluding to the thoughts connected with that change, which have power to rob it of all its horrors, and make us look upon it as, to each of us, the beginning of life.”

Miss Delaville put her handkerchief to her eyes, for she was easily moved to tears.

“When we look at the end of this existence in such a light, death is a blessed gift, which brings with it but one regret, that all we love cannot at the same time be partakers of it.”

“Ah! indeed,” sighed Miss Delaville: “I am sure you are very happy, Mr. Lyle, to be able to think so.”

“We should all think so, my dear lady,” said he.

“And I am sure,” continued Miss Delaville, “that if ever a man ought to be resigned and happy to die, you ought, Mr. Lyle; for I have always said, my dear Augusta, that your husband is the best man I ever knew, and, no doubt, deserves to go to heaven.”

“Oh, hush! pray hush!” said Henry Lyle, his face flushing with emotion, and assuming a look of intense pain: “deserve to go to heaven! Are these words to be used of a sinner



hastening into the presence of his God? Who but One ever deserved heaven? Are we yet so little Christian as to attempt such an argument as that?"

Miss Delaville looked abashed, but answered with real feeling,

"Do not say, are *we* so little Christian, Mr. Lyle? You are right, and I was very wrong."

"God bless you, Miss Delaville," said Henry Lyle, extending his hand towards her; and she buried her face in her handkerchief and sobbed aloud, while Lyle looked in concern from her to Augusta.

It was the last time Miss Delaville ever saw Henry Lyle.



## CHAPTER LVII.

THE soft, low tones of Augusta's voice came through the open window, for the evening was warm, and there was scarcely a perceptible breath of air. The couch of Lyle had been drawn towards the window, and over the tops of the houses he had watched the sun go down.

"Not yet," urged he, as Augusta expressed a fear that the evening air might injure him, and would have closed it out; and then the listener might have *heard* that Lyle was smiling, as he added, "I do not believe, my darling, that it makes any difference whether I expose myself or not."

Augusta was reading aloud, but she did not progress much with the book, for almost after every paragraph she paused to speak to Lyle, whose voice in answer struck fearfully on the ear of the man below.

At that hour Arthur Vere lingered beneath the window of the Lyles, attentively listening to all that passed.



“Put by the book and talk to me, Gussy.” And there was a movement, followed by a pause, until Augusta resumed her seat. They little thought they had so close a listener, and they chatted unreservedly and cheerfully. There was nothing of gloom and despondency in any of their words, although one of them was dying day by day; and every now and then even a short laugh would rise above the words of Lyle—from him, not from Augusta—a light laugh, as light as on the evening which Vere so well remembered, when Lyle’s merriment had caused the remarks of Mr. B——.

“Impossible,” asked Vere, mentally, “that such lightness of heart and buoyancy can exist even at such a time? Can nothing crush this man? Is he invulnerable to the effects of calamity?”

Yes, Vere; calamity, such as you think it, is met more than half way in such a Heaven-supported heart; and Lyle will go down to the grave in the same spirit of peace and cheerful resignation as he has lived.

It was no longer with the same feelings of revenge as heretofore that Arthur Vere listened outside the Lyles’ house. He could not have explained the impulse which had sent him there at that hour of the night, nor argued upon the influence which forced him to remain and hearken to words which cut him to the heart—Augusta’s expressions of endearment towards her husband, and Lyle’s noble principles and heavenly aspirations.

Then Augusta again argued with Lyle, and persuaded him to have the window shut; and so the conversation was stopped



to Vere, and he only heard still the murmuring voices. He walked to the opposite side of the street, and leant against one of the houses languidly, and he watched still the window of the Lyles. He could see Augusta's figure flit past, pictured upon the blind, which was now drawn down, and Vere sighed audibly.

How little thought Henry Lyle, ever so ready to answer the call of the afflicted and suffering, that so near him was a man suffering more acutely than any of the objects who daily claimed relief, both in mind and body. Vere turned away from the window, and walked slowly from the street.

It was in vain : old fancies were useless now as arms against these conflicting thoughts. All things seemed vain ; for the bed which he had prepared for himself was shorter than that a man could stretch himself on it, and the covering narrower than that he could wrap himself in it.

Nothing could crush this man ! Henry Lyle's had been a life of outward struggle—ever keeping Poverty at arm's length with difficulty—a life of fears and apprehensions very often for the future ; but it had been a happy life. He had carried from the cradle his own fountain of peace and happiness, and circumstances could never daunt him.

It was then true, that which Arthur Vere had often heard, that which he had preached, but had never practically believed, that happiness is in a man's own mind ; yet Vere had never known happiness, although he flattered himself that his own mind was all-powerful. Why had all his attempts at the ruin of Henry Lyle been defeated ? Misfortunes had fallen



harmless, and still Lyle could smile, even to his grave. Arthur Vere shuddered at the thoughts brought before him by the concluding word. It would be a study, an interesting study, he thought, to ask Lyle the reason of these things. There could be nothing without a reason.

“And I will give you Rest.”

Where did the words come from as they sounded in the ears of Arthur Vere? Did some passer-by say them? No; he could not see any one in the street besides himself; and yet he had seemed to hear them. Whose words were they? Where had he known them before—years ago?

Vere's head felt confused and wandering.

*Rest*: it was what he had never yet attained. Should he ever find it? There was no such thing as rest in this world, he knew. Where was there rest? In the grave?

The thoughts flitted through his mind without his bidding. Some one else was working the machine without his guidance.

Who could tell if there were rest beyond this world? Was a man to go on ever, ever thinking, until——what? It was very maddening to contemplate such a possibility. He could not think at all; he felt afraid of his own thoughts, he, who had boasted of making intellect a slave.



## CHAPTER LVIII.

It has been raining violently the whole afternoon, and the paving stones are running like a stream, whilst from the eaves large drops are falling and splashing heavily and loud upon the heads of unhappy passengers. But this is not a night for passengers; even the tired cab-horses slip as they try to draw up near the overflowing gutters, and the drivers have to jerk them quickly to prevent their falling on their knees. A miserable pariah dog, with his tail hanging down between his legs, and his ears making two streams of water, trots slowly along the streets, having no house to which to go, and looking anxiously from side to side, lest, even on so wet a night as this, some missile should be thrown at his head. The lamps are mirrored in the pools of water and show the whole length of the almost deserted Strand. There is a tall figure leaning against the rails of King Charles the First's equestrian statue, apparently regardless of the pouring



rain; he has been there at least some hours; but now he moves and crosses to the pavement near Northumberland House. His step is very unsteady, although hurried, and his arms are folded on his breast, as he totters on for some half a dozen yards more, tries to grasp at one of the lamp-posts, and then falls weightily to the ground.

“Hallo! I say, Brown, what’s that?” says a vulgar-looking man, who, with his friend, has a moment before emerged round the corner from the Hungerford Stairs, and who has heard the heavy fall, made to sound heavier by the stillness of the night. They both advance towards the spot where, prostrate, lies a human form; his face is downwards on the pavement, and Brown and his friend in a moment are alive with energy to assist the stranger.

“This is not a night for so fine a gentleman to be out, is it?” said Brown, in a low voice. And raising the fallen man, he placed his head upon his own knee, and the lamp-light fell upon his features.

His dark hair was soaked with rain and weighed down by the heavy water from each side of his pale forehead; the eyes were closed as if in death, and the perfectly-formed mouth partly open, showing the teeth firm set within. The fall had made a deep cut across the temple, and the blood trickled slowly over the beautiful face of the miserable man, making the features look more marble from the contrast.

“What shall we do with him?” says Brown, contemplating the face, which was to all appearance dead; “he is a good-looking fellow, anyhow.”



"Or has been," rejoined the other; "for I fancy he will never make love again."

"He is not dead, though," said Brown, pointing to the still running blood. And, taking out a bright-coloured pocket-handkerchief, he tenderly wiped the stranger's forehead. "We had best take him home, hadn't we? There ain't a cab, I suppose, anywhere near. Couldn't you run after one, old fellow?" he continued, to his companion; "I'll stay with the gentleman here."

Watson disappeared into Cockspur-street in search of a cab, and the kind-hearted Brown, now thoroughly roused, sought eagerly to find in his charge some remaining signs of life. He wrung his hair from the rain which had filled it, for his hat had been off some time and was nowhere to be found; and tried again to wipe his face dry. It had now ceased raining, and the clouds drifted fast across the sky, occasionally revealing for a moment the bright moon, which seemed to look inquisitively from between them at what had come to pass below. The stranger suddenly gave a deep sigh, and Brown could not refrain from saying aloud, "Bravo!"

"Oh, my God, forgive me!" said the fallen man, low and solemnly. And opening his eyes, he looked upwards for a moment in the face of Brown, and tried to raise himself from off his knee.

"Come, come," said the man, kindly, "they've gone to fetch you a cab, and you'll be all right in a moment."

A hopeless look came across the stranger's face: he sank his head down again, closed his eyes, and was once more insensible.



"Now, then," said Watson, as he drove up by the side of the cabman, "Brown, bring the gentleman."

"Come you and help, then, can't you, stupid?" replied Brown; and as Watson assisted to raise the stranger, "he was alive a minute ago, but I am afraid he is dead again. I never did see a man so weak. A fine fellow, too," he continued, as they lifted him into the carriage.

"Where to?" said the cabman.

Brown took off his hat in order to scratch his head. "Where to?" said he, somewhat fiercely, looking at Watson.

Watson looked towards the stranger, as if to read in his inanimate face an answer. At length he said, "Maybe he has a card."

"Of course," said Brown; "you stupid dolt not to have given that a thought before. I'll look in the gentleman's pocket."

There was a card-case, but no address. Simply the name, "Mr. Vere." Brown scratched his head again.

"Better go to the next hotel, perhaps," suggested Watson.

"Of course," said his friend, "of course we had. The Golden Cross."

The cab was at the door in a few seconds, and Vere was carried out into the entrance-hall, stared at and criticised by all the waiters.

"It's Vere," said one, seeing that he was insensible, and in his upstart impertinence dropping the usual respect. "Only to think what's he been a doing?"

But such conjectures were soon put a stop to. Women were



there, pitying the poor, dear young gentleman, and pitying practically, for they made way for him to be carried up-stairs, and in a short time he was placed carefully upon a bed, whilst the landlord sent off for a surgeon.

Vere was in a high fever, and for many hours was delirious ; and in his madness his ravings were fearful, terrifying even the kind nurse who sat beside his bed, accustomed as she was to scenes of horror, disease, and death. He told of years of sin and iniquity, accompanied with expressions of such remorse as wrung the heart to listen to ; and with his scenes of evil his highly-cultivated mind mingled so much of poetry and beauty as added, by the sympathy it awoke, to the terrors of his delirium. But delirium is short-lived, and Vere again opened his eyes to reason, after a short sleep, and weakly tried to raise himself from the pillow and look around the room in which he lay. The nurse came quickly to his bedside,

“ There, there, dear, go to sleep, do ; or is there anything I can fetch you, sir ? ”

Vere looked at her uneasily, as if he scarcely comprehended what she said, and sank his head down again upon the pillow



## CHAPTER LIX.

THAT evening, as Augusta was sitting by the couch of her husband, a small note was put into her hands by the maid-servant.

“Who left it?” inquired she.

“A boy, who said he was from the Golden Cross Hotel, ma’am : there is no answer.”

Augusta opened it, unable to recognize the handwriting. No wonder, even had it once been familiar to her. The inside was as illegibly written as the address, as if the hand had trembled greatly—only this :

“Come to me, for pity’s sake. I am at the Golden Cross, and have been very ill.

“Yours, &c.,

A. VERE.”

There was something affecting in the brevity of the note and



the indisputable token of weakness shown in the handwriting, and the tears started to Augusta Lyle's eyes as she read it.

"That he should come to this," she ejaculated.

"What is it, love?" asked Lyle.

"It is a note from Mr. Vere," said Augusta, placing it in her husband's hand. "I must go to him at once."

"You cannot go alone, Augusta, at this time of night, and to such a public hotel as that."

She looked at him half reproachfully. "And Mr. Vere, Henry? Ought I to refuse?"

"Take the servant with you," said Lyle.

"And leave you alone? No; I will go by myself, may I not? Look at his note again, Henry, dear."

"Go; God bless you!" said Lyle. "You are right."

It was discomfort certainly, and unlike what Augusta had been used to, to have to drive alone in a cab to the Golden Cross; to enter the vestibule, evidently a gazing-stock to, apparently, thousands of waiters, all ready to answer at once any question with an impertinent half-smile upon their faces when Augusta inquired for Mr. Vere; to feel that eyes were fixed upon her, although she never looked towards their possessors; to have to ask to be shown to the sick-room of a single man; to hear the name of Vere repeated in various voices, but always with a tone of surprise; and have a murmur of wonderment raised at her request. Augusta's cheek burned at the imputation the murmur seemed to imply, but she steadily went through with what she had determined to do. The words of Vere's note recurred to her mind: "Come to me for pity's sake;



I am very ill ;” and although her heart trembled as she followed where a woman led the way, and an indignant flush for a moment rose to her brow as the chambermaid showed her which was the door without a word, as if she looked upon her as inferior in virtue to herself, her calmness did not desert her ; but quietly thanking the woman, and dismissing her, she opened the door softly, and entered where Vere lay.

His eyes were closed, nor did he hear her until she stood beside him and laid her hand on his, which struck a pain to her heart by its intense fever. Oh, what a change from what he used to be ! His eyes were unnaturally bright from fever, and the hectic spots upon his cheeks burned painfully. The features were unchanged, but the change was in the expression : the haughty curl of the upper lip was smoothed, and the proud glances were exchanged for a fixed look of sorrow.

Vere turned his eyes quickly towards her.

“Is that you, Augusta ? Have you come to me at my asking ? I scarcely hoped you would ; but it is like yourself.”

He sat up with some difficulty, and continued :

“It is a long time since we have met, and many things have passed since then. I count the time by events, not months. I have been a reckless man, but in all my recklessness, Augusta, I have ever loved you—ay, loved you,” he added, seeing a slight change in her expression, “as well as a villain could love ; but do not fear that it is to make professions of love to you that I wished to see you : no, Augusta, such things have passed with me. Do you recollect long ago telling me I was on the road to misery ? You were not right, I was



then on the road of misery. I have never been a happy man—never since those thoughts passed away which made me hesitate which road to take. Augusta, do you know that I am dying? I do not attend to what others say to me; I am fully aware of it myself; and how I despise the weakness of my pretended friend, who would buoy me up with false hopes of life, when he knows the whole time, the fool! that Death has his iron hand upon me. How much have such physicians to answer for! But it is not I should speak of other men's faults and follies. Augusta, I always maintained, you are aware, a self-made religion, or more strictly speaking, irreligion. Will that stand me in stead now, when the unseen world opens so little distant on my soul? Will the 'oppositions of science, falsely so called,' be available to me before a Divine tribunal?"

"But, Arthur Vere——"

"Oh, call me Arthur, Augusta: that is kind in you. I have been lately nought but Vere to every one, and Vere is a man whom now I execrate. When I was a child I was called Arthur; my poor mother used to love the name, and it seems to bring back some thoughts of innocence."

"Oh, if you could be a child again!" said she.

"Ah, *he* told me so; that I must become a child, and learn as a child: and my proud spirit hated him for the words."

Augusta shuddered.

"I wished to see you once again, Augusta," resumed Vere, "for I shall never see you more: we went different roads in this life, and we shall still go opposite ways in the life to come. You see, I have a sense of justice; I know what I deserve. When



you bid adieu to me, it will be a last, eternal farewell. What! can it be possible that I should so affect you? Dear, dear girl!" said Vere, slightly trembling, as Augusta, convulsed with grief, flung herself on her knees beside the bed. "Augusta," continued he, solemnly, "do not pray for me; I have not for years breathed a prayer: do not dare to utter my foul name before Heavens throne; it would pollute the air which God and angels breathe; and it will be useless. No, it is too late, now."

"Oh no, no, Arthur Vere; do not you dare say thus: it is never, it can never be too late. Oh! that you would pray for yourself—that you would believe yourself, that even at the last hour those who come to Him, He will in no wise cast out."

"Dear little girl!" said Vere, stroking her head with his burning hand. "Augusta, for the first time for years I read the bible for its own sake, not for the sake of opposing it, and when I opened it these words were nearest me: 'And if ye have been unfaithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches!' It was a just sentence. What were my earthly talents, and what their produce? Had I simply hid my Lord's money, and at His coming given Him but his own!—but there is no pre-example of my case. Augusta, I would change my lot at this present moment with the poorest wretch on earth who had not desecrated all God's gifts, as I have. Oh! why did the Almighty make me differ from another, in giving me powers to exalt me in my own mind?—why had I such unbounded capacity for evil?—why was not I——?"

"Hush, hush! All God's gifts are good, and your powers were of God's best gifts; you err in taking to your case one



sentence only of the Scriptures. You are still judging as you used to judge, and wresting the passage to your own——”

“Destruction! Yes, Augusta, that is the word.”

“You have very often, formerly, Arthur, heard the text, ‘Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool?’”

“Yes, and now your words sound to me like a very lovely song by one who hath a pleasant voice.”

“They are not words of mine,” said Augusta.

“I know it; but, Augusta, my head is so filled with human and false philosophies and vain deceits, that my thoughts check any inroads of the truth. I cannot now believe, although I know it to be truth. The arguments I now feel to be fallacies will rise in my mind, where they have so long domineered, and occupy my head even against my will.”

“But those of God are not arguments of the head, but of the heart; and I know that you have yourself believed that even the illusions of the heart must gain the mastery over mere head-knowledge.”

“Have I, Augusta? I am glad of that.” He paused for a few moments, and then rejoined,

“Augusta, do you think that your—your husband would see me for a moment?”

“I am quite sure that nothing would give Lyle greater pleasure than to come to you, if he could be of any service; but oh, Mr. Vere!” exclaimed Augusta, bursting into tears, “my Lyle is dying, he is unable to rise from his bed, or he would not have let me come alone to-night.”



Vere covered his face with his hands, and trembled.

“And I shall meet that man before the judgment-seat of God! Why does he haunt me always, even into eternity?” said he, wildly, and looking suddenly at her with his eyes blazing. He caught her glance full of tears, and his fury changed in a moment.

“Is it possible?” he asked, “that he would have come to me had he been able; that he would look at me with any feeling but that of horror? Is it with his knowledge that you are here at this moment?”

“I showed him your note.”

“With his approval?” asked Vere.

“Certainly; he would approve of all that is right.”

“Augusta, do you recollect when I wished you to be my wife?”—the tears fell fast from Augusta’s eyes;—“how heartily should you thank Heaven that you were spared that curse! I thought I could have devoted myself to a wife, but devotion was not in my nature. Hating Lyle as I did, I yet esteemed you a happy woman when you married him; for at my worst I could admire virtue, although I could not imitate, and while I ridiculed Lyle and named his excellence pretended, many a time a sigh of regret has surprised me, when in a reverie I have recollected his words and actions running side by side; and although I have cursed him in my heart—do not shudder, Augusta; Heaven sends back bad men’s curses on their own heads—I have envied him his moral dignity. Bless Heaven for the love of a good man, and that you have been preserved from attaching yourself to a villain! Are not these strange



words to come from me?" he asked, moving about restlessly as he spoke.

Augusta felt his hand: his pulse was raging with excitement, although he had appeared calm; and she was alarmed.

"I had better leave you now: I will come again to-morrow; indeed, you must try to lie still," said she.

"And Lyle? Tell him——" said Vere; "no, tell him all you have seen to-day, and say that he is avenged."

Augusta shook her head sadly.

"Is he really dying?" asked Vere, with a very different tone to that he had used, when in Florence he spoke on the same subject.

"He was wounded accidentally while in Florence," said Augusta; "and the effects of that accident have counteracted all the progress he had made."

"Wounded?" asked Vere, with animation: "how?—when?"

"In defending an Englishman from the attack of a foreigner in the streets of Florence, one night," answered Augusta, almost mechanically.

"The Englishman! Who was it? Tell me," said he.

"Lyle never told me his name; but he said he recognized him, before his interference. Some former acquaintance, I suppose; he has many."

"Leave me now, Augusta," said Vere.

"Go back to your husband, and tell him I *shall* meet him before long: for a short time, only to part for ever. Go; I will not keep you from him longer."



## CHAPTER LX.

AUGUSTA was unconscious of anything around her, of the looks and tones which had annoyed her on her entrance, as she left the Golden Cross Hotel. Her mind was full only of the scene she had quitted, and it was not until she again reached her husband's presence that she seemed able to realize what had taken place. There, by his bedside, she knelt, and at times, almost overcome by tears, she repeated to him, word for word, the harrowing account of Vere's distress; and then, as the contrast would suggest itself to her as she glanced at the face of Lyle, now grown almost angelic as the stamp of immortality became more deeply impressed upon his features, she would throw her arms around him, and aloud bless God who had given her, for however short a time, such a heart to love her. Lyle was considerably weaker on the following morning, but he strove to conceal the weakness from Augusta, and urged her to go again to Vere, as he had so earnestly desired it.



Augusta found him still excited, although less strong than on the previous night. The nurse was evidently annoyed at Augusta's entrance; but Vere overheard her voice demanding admittance, and called out in a loud and impatient tone that she should come in.

"Well!" said he, as she entered, as if taking up the interview where it had ceased the night before, "did you tell him what I said?"

"Yes, everything; he is very sorry to hear you are ill."

"Sorry!" echoed Vere, rather contemptuously; "a man is not sorry to hear of the death of one who has injured him, and would have injured him more had he been able: and have you learnt the name of the Englishman whom Lyle so quixotically defended, and got his own death through doing so?"

"I have asked him," answered Augusta; "you know it, Mr. Vere."

"And has he never regretted it?" asked the other—"has he never cursed the cause of his death?"

"Hush, hush!" said Augusta, painfully. "How fearfully you talk! Christians do not curse their fellow-creatures. I have told you that Harry has never mentioned even to me, until now, your name as the cause."

"Augusta," asked Vere, suddenly changing his tone, "is this Christianity? Would to God, then, I were a Christian!"

Augusta was affected, yet tried to point him to the source of Christianity.

"It is useless—useless," said Vere, sadly; "I told you yesterday, that it is all over with me in this world, and in the



next. I am aware of, and can appreciate the justice of my condemnation. I have deserved hell, and I shall find it."

"We have all deserved hell; but Heaven offers mercy as well as justice, Mr. Vere," urged Augusta.

"Not to those who have mocked at mercy's offers. No, Augusta, do not try to combat my conception of the justice of God. He could not do otherwise than damn me, if He will act consistently with His own word. 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.'"

"Oh! Arthur Vere, do not so calmly speak of such a fearful prospect. Can you thus look forward to damnation, and not utter a cry to Heaven for help?"

Vere smiled faintly. "My dear girl," said he, "there is a calmness which arises from hopelessness, from despair."

"And you may die, and never seek forgiveness."

"Even so, Gussy: I will not insult my Maker further. He knows I have done so during my lifetime sufficiently."

"Oh, Arthur, you mistake; indeed, you are in fatal error. Is a demand for mercy and pardon an insult?" exclaimed Augusta.

"But how could I ask mercy?" said he, sternly. "What plea can I make?"

"You see the necessity of a plea?" she asked.

"Would you have me simply ask for mercy's sake, when I have despised mercy?" said Vere.

"No, not for mercy's sake."

"For my virtue's sake, perhaps?" said Vere, sarcastically.

"Neither for that: but there are merits for whose sake you may ask, and will find mercy. Had we no Saviour——"



"Hush, hush!" said Vere, quickly, an expression of awe coming over his features. "Do not Augusta, mention in my polluted presence that sacred name, which I have denied, yes crucified afresh," said he writhing mentally, "and put to an open shame."

"Yet we must speak of Him, and now, as the last act, perhaps, of your life, honour His name by depending on Him as proof of your sorrow for your life of dishonour. Do you believe, Arthur Vere, that the Saviour is God?"

"I do now, Augusta. I cannot help believing it. I am forced to receive now, even against my will, all that I before disputed and thought I had so strengthened my mind against."

"And you believe in the Almighty's justice?"

"Most assuredly. You know I do; and I expect to meet with it."

"Would it be just to break His own promise? Would it be like Himself?"

"No, no: and yet——"

"Yet what?" asked Augusta.

"Augusta you do not know what I have been. You do not know the degradation and sin to which I have stooped. I am utterly helpless."

"That is the first step on the road to heaven, that acknowledgement of yours. Being a sinner is your plea for mercy, and His righteousness your surety of acceptance. He, for His part, is willing to save. Will not you be willing to accept the salvation?"

"Now, look you, Augusta," exclaimed Vere; "do you remember to what kind of man you are speaking? Can you



imagine for a moment that one may scoff at all these things during a lifetime, and when death is staring you in the face, go easily to heaven by simply crying out that you are sorry?"

"But, Vere, it is a fearful thing to question God's mercy."

"So it is. I have lived a life of such fearfulness, however; and now, upon my death-bed, what have I? Augusta, look at me," said he, in a burst of almost frenzy; look what I have come to. Where is the flattery, where the friends of former days? I killed my mother by my ingratitude; and am helpless, left to the care of strangers, I who thought I might have led mankind. What avails it know that I had talents when my human understanding will not save me? What that I had beauty? Will beauty be flattered in the grave? Can worldly applause and public fame plead for me hereafter? I have had gifts more than many, but each gift has by me been turned into an occasion of sin, and now I am left within the grasp of death, naked and open to my great enemy. Oh, Augusta, that I could tell the whole world to flee self-reliance; that I could tell the world that there is nothing of theirs can avail upon a dying bed—nothing. Tell them, as I would tell them did I live, that all the honours of this world are valueless, the adulation of men soul-sickening, when such a time as this is come. They *whom the world calls happy* have nothing to cling to on a dying bed."

"Nothing of this life, Arthur Vere; but they have the promise of the Gospel, trust in their Saviour," Augusta replied.

"Trust! That is a beautiful word," said Vere, with an effort, the sound trembling on his lips; and the tears, starting



to his eyes, fell upon the hand of Augusta. He smiled sadly, saying, "It is a long time since I have shed tears; I thought I had forgotten how to weep."

Augusta rose, as the nurse knocked at the door.

"You are not going?" said Vere, anxiously.

"I must: I shall make you more ill if I stay too long with you. And my Lyle?" said Augusta, as the recollection of his state recurred to her. And her tears fell fast at the mention of his name.

"Ay, true: go to your Lyle. It would be unjust indeed that such as I should keep you from him. Go to your Lyle, and speak to him of such things as you have told me; they will fall on more attentive ears."

"Oh! Arthur Vere, if you would but believe them!" urged Augusta.

He laughed. "I do believe them, every one: I might be less wretched if I did not. A man on his death-bed, Augusta, cannot reject these things; he must believe with a horrifying faith, as if he were already a devil. Go to your Lyle, and take my thanks with you for coming to me. You will never see me again, Gussy, so good-by for ever."

She would have spoken again, have reiterated the argument she had used, but her voice failed her, and throwing herself on her knees by his bed-side, she sobbed out an impetuous prayer for the reckless man. He patted her on the head as she knelt, called her a good little girl, laughed bitterly, and told her to go back to her Lyle again. And that evening a message was sent her that he was dead.



## CHAPTER LXI.

AUGUSTA returned to her Lyle, and under the soft influence of his gentle tones and soothing words, the horror of the late scene she had witnessed wore away. Then, and not until then, she observed his increased illness, and the thought of the nearness of their parting was forced upon her; not with violent and impetuous grief, or any despairing eloquence, but with the quiet regret which had been increasing day by day, as the object of it endeared himself more to her heart, and grew more heavenly as he neared the confines of the earth. Things seen and present grew to look like distant and detached objects, and as if only eternity were real; that this world was a dream, and a very short one, from which we all soon shall wake to enter really upon life.

One evening, when the sun had set and twilight was drawing in, the curtains being yet undrawn and the room unlighted by any artificial means, Augusta laid aside the Book she had



been reading aloud, and drew near to her husband. The last words of the chapter still sounded in their ears: "And to you that fear my name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings."

"Sing to me, Gussy," said Lyle, presently.

She fetched her guitar and sang the songs which he had always loved so much, he, as always, listening almost breathlessly to the air, and showing by the mutability of his features every phase of emotion with which he was touched. She ceased, and he spoke in a low voice:

"Augusta, do you remember the night, years ago, when first you sang to me?"

She bowed her head, but did not answer.

"Until then I had had no Home. In childhood I met with harshness, and the affections with which my breast was overflowing were thrown back forcibly upon my own heart. I struggled as a child, not alone with outward circumstances, but with inward grief, and was made, in feeling, a man before my time. I learnt to look upon the world as one to be fought with, and not sympathized with. I was fast becoming an individual in society, not one of the mass. Augusta, my Gussy, before I met with you, I was rapidly growing a stranger towards others, and learnt to preach better, every day, as I practised less humanly.

"I had been rebuffed, my pride had been continually hurt, and I was preparing to defy the world.

"It was an unmanly, but more, an unchristian mind, in which I lived for some years, until the grace and providence



of God taught me to feel where before I had only moralized. I began to have some appreciation of the true meaning of Home (that name which I had always loved, but, unhappily for me, as a name only. Nothing ruins a man like the crushing of all these feelings early in life) as my heart learnt to throb with the hearts of others.

No man is for himself alone : he cannot be.

When I saw you, my Augusta, all these feelings were rife within my bosom, and I think I may dare to say that the heart I offered you was the honest heart of a man, not of a machine made in man's image.

"How my heart yearned for true sympathy with one heart in return for mine, even at this moment I vividly remember ; yet, had not God blessed me with your love, do not think I should have consumed my days as a broken-down and disappointed man, reckless of the future and irrespective of the passing time. I had then, I trust, learnt to be a man, and deeply as such a rejection, which for some months I considered as given tacitly on your part, wounded, and almost, for the time, broke my heart, I formed but one of the many disappointed beings of the world, all demanding sympathy, and all demanding it rightfully, and accrediting it on my part.

"All the world is creditor to the heart, Gussy.

"Would you have loved me better had I now told you that I should have been sunk in despair at your rejection?" he asked, fondly putting his arm round her.

"Nothing could make me love you better, Henry. If it could be so, it might be such a confession as the one you have



just made, proving yourself, as always, nature's nobleman."

Hush, hush, you silly girl," said he, smiling, and then resumed :

"When I loved you, Augusta, I found my earthly Home in perfection, and it has continued thus perfect always, has it not, dearest? You have been *Augusta* to me, in raising my low-born thoughts to nobleness and greatness. You have been *Augusta* in your self-devotion and love, from the first moment you were mine."

"I!" said she, in astonishment at his words. "You have been my guide, my counsellor, my heaven-director, never I yours. Your love misleads you, my Lyle. You magnify me through the lens of your own partiality. I have been your pupil always. Would to God I might be so to the end!"

"And you will still be *Augusta*, will you not?" said he, waiving her objection. "When we have parted here, you will still strive nobly above this present life—you will still aspire to the native regions of the soul, and struggle for the heavenliness of heaven's children?"

"I would be anything you say; but oh, my Lyle, what shall I be when we have parted—when the prop, the stay is taken from me?"

"The prop, the stay, Augusta?" he asked, almost sternly. "Do we then rely upon transient things? Is it I whom you have made your god?"

"I was wrong, Henry."

God bless you, dear! You remember the first evening you sang to me; do you recollect the night your father died?



Sing to me again, Gussy. It may be the last time I shall ever hear you."

She again took her guitar and sang, as of old, the old song, "Home, sweet Home!" clearly and distinctly, with none of the nervous trembling which she had felt the night her father died, but with the same deep pathos of that evening.

There is a deeper meaning in the song than the mere words at the first hearing would convey.

It seemed to Augusta as if she could not have shed tears this night. There was an unnatural stillness about all things, and no sound interrupted the tones of her husband's sweet and plaintive voice, as she listened to them, feeling as if she could so listen for hours.

He asked her to light the lamp which hung above the easel, where the yet unfinished painting he had been occupied upon was standing.

Lamplight is not favourable to a painting, as we know; but the sudden and unnatural brilliancy shone direct upon the canvas, and lighted up a subject, a thousand times repeated it is true, but always beautiful, throwing the darks into deeper shadow, and catching the bright lights of the foreground.

It was a landscape. The deep belt of trees which formed the side threw out the silver stream of the river which ran in the foreground, gently reflecting every shadow, rippling playfully, as if at times forgetful that the night was coming on. All was so serenely peaceful, that the picture almost spoke its own tale of the hope and faith which had animated the heart of the painter, flooded completely, and merging into that flood



every lesser light, by the broad, glorious golden of the sunset, which cast back into temporary neglect all the minor objects of the scene. And yet the life-objects of the front, which after a time demanded the attention, showed that even in the last hour the daily circumstances of life yet held their interest.

The painting was nearly finished, and as Augusta, at her husband's desire, lighted the lamp above it, Lyle turned his eyes upon his last efforts in the art he had loved so much, and scrutinized it closely. The implements of his work were near the easel, and to the almost fearful astonishment of his wife, the dying man rose from the couch, from which he had not risen for many days, and with strength unnatural and forced, walked towards the picture.

His face was flushed with excitement, his eyes dilated and painfully brilliant, while his long light hair hung down about his shoulders, pushed back at the temples, and curling like a crown over his head. He laid one of his fragile hands upon the easel, and turned his face to her.

"Augusta," said he—and years afterwards the tones of his voice rang in her ears—"all these things are passing from me, and whither would the brightness of my life's stream be, had not I the hope of the everlasting Dawn of Day, when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise to me with healing on His wings?"—His voice was clear and strong, and his action beautiful, as she gazed at him with an earnestness painful to behold.

He staggered, and caught at the easel, but recollecting himself, tottered back to the couch from whence he had risen, and sat down. His face became ashy pale, and Augusta took his



hands and kissed them; she smoothed his hair from off his forehead, and fondled him as if he had been a child, and as he looked up in her face trustingly, and from thence to heaven—for he vainly attempted to form a prayer or blessing into words—he died.



## CHAPTER LXII.

AUGUSTA saw at once what had taken place, but she was yet undismayed. She laid his head upon her bosom for a few moments, repeatedly kissing the curling hair ; she pressed her lips to the closed eyes, those gentle eyes which had never looked at her except in love, and then laying his head down softly on the pillow of the bed, she knelt beside the corpse and with one of its hands between her own, she prayed as she *had never prayed before*.

Affliction makes us weep and cry to God ; anxiety will almost wrestle with the Almighty ; gratitude will, or should, send forth tear-drawing praises and thanksgivings. In all these things we pray, but yet God is in heaven and we on earth ; but here, with God's agent visibly working in her presence, with the last looks of love of God's property still on her eyes, realizing in her own person and in *his* God's everlasting promises, Augusta prayed as she never had prayed—as it were, holding the garments of her Lord.



It seemed as if there was no sorrow in her prayer. Thanksgiv-  
ing was there—thanks for the time he had been hers, and  
an implication of gratitude that now he was God's only. Was  
this unnatural in Augusta? You are right: it was not nature  
which so taught her, it was grace.

She rose and looked at his face attentively, and in a quiet  
voice addressed him:

“Adieu, my beautiful, my best. Oh, my Lyle! how shall  
I wander on without you? How shall I miss the gentle guid-  
ance of that sweet voice, the looks of those dear eyes! I shall  
be very sad without you, beloved of my soul, with nought re-  
maining but your memory, and the sweet philosophy of those  
precepts indelibly impressed upon my heart. Do you think of  
me even now, my Lyle? Will you think of me often, until  
we meet again, and will you ever wish that that meeting may  
be speedy?”

A few tears she shed, involuntary tears, being unaware her-  
self that they fell from her eyes, as she gazed at his calm face  
with the admiration of a poet as well as the affection of a  
wife.

The landlady of the house, on the following morning, wept  
profusely when she saw the corpse of Lyle, looking, as she  
said, “so easy and lovely,” and gazed reproachfully at Augusta  
when she saw her composed, and without tears in her eyes.

\* \* \* \* \*

Vere's body was laid in its last bed, amongst the dead,  
where all things are forgotten. He had relations, and many  
of them attended his funeral as a mark of respect for the



family name, although he had quarrelled with the most part of them during his public career, and had had, of late, very little intercourse with any one of them. A very expensive monument was erected to his memory.

“How shocking!” said the Miss Delavilles, when they read in the newspapers that Arthur Vere was dead.

“How shocking!” exclaimed they also when Mrs. Seymour told them of the death of Henry Lyle; and that lady’s lips parted involuntarily as if about to combat such a word being used in reference to the transition Lyle had made, but the Miss Delavilles looked unconvincible and properly horrified, and she forbore remark.

\* \* \* \* \*

Upon opening Vere’s will, he was found to have left all his property, which was considerable, to Augusta Lyle.

“There was a time,” said Augusta, upon hearing the fact, “when such an acquisition would have been hailed with joy; but now——”

Still, dear Augusta, the wealth sent you will carry a blessing with it. It will be the means of soothing the hours of many here, the means of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and sheltering the houseless, will it not be the aid of all those noble efforts of your heart to follow in the footsteps which your beloved Lyle pointed out, and which were first trod by the Great Master of Charity?

\* \* \* \* \*

“Ah, Vere was a lucky fellow,” observed Sir William S——. “He had legacies from everybody: I never knew a fellow



with such luck : I believe people used to leave him money for his handsome face. I wish, I'm sure, they would do the same for me. Don't laugh, Miss Bella ; I have been a good-looking man in my day, I can assure you."

"I don't doubt it," replied the lady. "I am sure any one can see that, and not such a long day off."

"I declare," continued Sir William S——, "it makes one feel disposed to moralize—a thing I am not much addicted to—to hear of one fellow dying immensely rich, and another, just at the same time, as Lyle, having had to work all his life, and then, after all, to die poor—why one man should have everything, and another nothing."

"Why indeed !" ejaculated Miss Bella Delaville

"However," continued the baronet, "I know that Vere has left everything almost to Mrs. Lyle. It seems very odd : rather queer, doesn't it—eh?"

The Miss Delavilles said it was unaccountable, and they couldn't understand it, and that things were very sad, and that Mrs. Lyle ought to congratulate herself, they were sure ; and meanwhile Mrs. Lyle was tossing and raging with fever.

Yes, the excitement and long-protracted suspense and trial of nerves and strength were taking effect now. There was nothing more to be done ; no longer Lyle to be waited on, to be borne up for ; no longer need tears be checked and agony concealed. Lyle was gone ; the grave had received his body, and nothing remained here visible to Augusta of her love but the curling light hair which she had taken from his head and now wore in her bosom.



She did not know that she was no longer in the house where Lyle had died ; that Mrs. Seymour had taken her home with her immediately after the funeral, that the old scenes and familiar objects should not constantly keep alive the presence of her grief. Still she thought she was with Henry Lyle, sitting by his bedside, talking to him, thinking only of his wants, listening to that voice which she should never hear again this side the grave.

It seemed wonderful, to look at Augusta's slight little figure and worn-out frame—palpable now, when all interest was concentrated upon her—how that girl could ever have exerted herself as she had done. Unwearying, unflinching, nothing had been too hard, no effort too great. She had endured ail patiently, fought with all bravely ; but now it was over, and she was but a fragile, helpless little thing, raving always of Lyle, and utterly unconscious of all around her.

Mrs. Seymour thought of the days when Augusta had been a young girl at her father's house, singing, laughing, talking more nonsense than sense, eagerly persuing every trifle, moved by every circumstance to more emotion than the occasion seemed to require, apparently volatile, but recalled by a kind word in a moment to better things, or by a harsh, impertinent one, made to flush with resentment.

Do we go too far in saying that such are the materials of noble character ?



## CHAPTER LXIII.

THERE was rather a commotion in Clarence and the adjoining courts and lanes. Clarence-court was where the brothers Carter, and various other of Lyle's friends lived, and was a place which had been well known to Henry Lyle.

It was late in the autumn evening, some hours after the men had returned from their work, but Richard Carter had been out again to inquire after Henry Lyle. It was upon his return that the commotion took place.

"Well, Dick?" said inquiringly, Williams, "the model cottager," as Augusta had styled him, as Carter passed the door of his house.

Richard stopped his course, and leant against the door-post of William's cottage, and his doing so was the signal for the several individuals loitering about the court to draw near, and listen to what was being said.

"He's gone!" said Richard Carter, sadly; and for some moments after the announcement, no one spoke.

Meanwhile, Willy Benson, in company with his instructor,



Bertram, came near to inquire also. Bertram did not live in the same neighbourhood, but came often to ask of the brothers Carter news of Lyle.

"Well," said he, in his turn, not having heard the answer which had produced so complete a silence for a time, "how's Mr. Lyle?"

"Better than ever he was before," replied Carter; "gone to his Home."

Bertram made no answer, but turned aside, and walked quickly towards his own house, while his companion stared in bewildered grief in the face of Richard Carter.

"Not dead!" said he, when he had found his speech.

"Yes, dead, my good fellow," said Carter. "It is a bad piece of news for many of us."

Mrs. Williams put her apron to her eyes and went into her cottage, and Willy Benson burst into a passionate fit of crying.

"He was always so good to me!" he exclaimed.

"So many of us might say," answered Carter. "There are not many like him; leastways, I have not met with them if there are; but it won't mend things to fret over them, Willy. Better cheer up, and follow after your master." The which speech Carter having delivered philosophically and with great calmness, he left the assembled group, and sought the house where he and his brother lived.

"Well, Dick, my boy?" was the salutation which met his ear upon his entrance.

Dick well understood the meaning of the question, and as before, he replied,



"Dead, Bill ! and I am vexed to have to say it."

"William Carter's face fell as he heard the other speak, and he was silent for a few moments. Dick rose and shut the door, and as he turned again towards the table where his brother sat, their eyes met.

"This is a bad job, Dick, my good fellow !" said William, with his eyes full of tears.

"He would have told us *not*," replied Richard, his voice visibly trembling.

The remarks were, perhaps, common-place. They were not much educated men ; but the allusion, however awkwardly expressed by the one, was understood by the other.

That evening, Richard and William Carter could not have found it in their hearts to cavil at each other. Lyle's spirit of love seemed to hover over the scenes which he in life had known. When, later in the evening, William Carter, in speaking to his brother, laid his hand upon his arm, the latter took the hand in his, and, as if impatiently mastering a sigh, exclaimed,

"Bill, do you know, I wish I was a better man than I am !"

The Miss Delavilles read the paragraph in the morning paper which told of the death of Henry Lyle, and they exclaimed again, as they had done before, "How shocking !"

"And how curious, also," added Miss Bella, "that he should die just at the same time as poor dear Mr. Vere ! How dreadful ! for they were so associated with each other."

There was an obituary of Vere in the same journal, and a



slight sketch of his literary career. Both men were mentioned as losses to the circles in which they moved, and the Miss Delavilles felt very sentimental all that day, and spoke some very wise sayings to prove their admiration of talent, and the uncertainty of sublunary things ; and thenceforth they constituted, or attempted to constitute, Mr. B—— their polar star.

None spoke of Lyle's good works ; they were soon forgotten by most, yet they followed him ; and the blessing of the poor, and of him who was ready to perish, at times surrounded the memory of his name in humble streets and vulgar haunts, where the Miss Delavilles never came.

None spoke of Vere's ill deeds ; for the living are indulgent to the dead, however harshly they may judge each other ; and in the eyes of man, death is an expiation of private offences at least.

Each was mentioned by his partisans as " poor," as it is the custom to speak of dead men ; and the Miss Delavilles would speak in the same breath of poor Mr. Lyle and poor Mr. Vere, without a thought as to the justice of the term. And all things went on the same as they had before ; the Miss Delavilles still trifled and wasted life ; Sir William S—— still misused it ; all acknowledged, if they thought about it, that Henry Lyle had taught and acted better things than they, and yet did not stop to consider whether they might not, each one of them, have incurred fresh blame and guilt, because they had seen these things and neglected to do them.



## CHAPTER LXIV.

ON the day following Lyle's funeral, a bright and sunny morning, Philip Wilson rushed tumultuously into the presence of Mrs. Seymour.

That lady started from her chair at sight of him, and cordially returned his embrace.

"The Lyles, where are they now?" inquired the young man, as soon as the first excitement had subsided. "I have not seen them: I came first to you to inquire where they live."

"They have been abroad," answered Mrs. Seymour, wishing to gain time.

"But have they not returned?" asked Philip.

"Yes; Augusta is with me now: she is with me alone."

"But Henry——?"

Mrs. Seymour looked him full in the face: she did not know what to say: she was no hand at breaking gradually a piece of news.



"Where is Henry?" asked Philip again.

"Oh, my dear boy," said Mrs. Seymour, "you remember that Henry Lyle was very ill when last you saw him?"

Philip Wilson made no exclamation of surprise, but after staring fixedly at Mrs. Seymour for a few minutes, and reading in her distressed face a confirmation of his fear, he covered his face with his hands, and the tears forced themselves through his fingers.

"Oh, my poor Gussy!" said he, when he could speak.

"Where is she?" asked he.

"I told you, my dear," said Mrs. Seymour. "Augusta is with me; she is up-stairs."

Philip made a movement towards the door as if he would go to her, but Mrs. Seymour laid her hand upon his arm.

"Not now, Philip; you must not go to her now. Augusta is not well; she is up-stairs."

"She is not dying also?" asked Philip, with a childish look of affright.

"Oh no, God forbid! but she has been, and is, very ill. The excitement has brought on a fever. You shall see her before long; perhaps to-morrow," said Mrs. Seymour, trying to soothe his agitation.

Philip left the house, and wandered about distractedly, he cared not whither. It was in a whirl of opposing feelings that he walked along the streets of London, at times hurriedly, as if business of importance urged him on; and then slowly sauntering, or listlessly dragging his footsteps on, in unison with his frequent changes of thought.



He regretted honestly the death of Henry Lyle, to whom he had always been warmly attached, and whom he had respected and admired.

He felt acutely for the sorrow of Augusta in her loss ; but through all would come the feeling that she was again free.

It seemed almost impious so to feel at such a time, and this it was that caused Philip to hasten his footsteps as if he would escape from his own thoughts by speedy motion. Henry Lyle but just buried, and he, his friend, so dreaming ! Yet all the old recollection of his boyish love would come back to him ; his disappointment, the regrets which had sealed his heart against any new attachment, the friendship, as he thought it, which he had since felt so fervently towards Augusta, and which now revealed itself in its true colours, as but the continuation of the same love. She was free, and he was now an honest and hard-working man, having realized a small income by his own exertions, and capable of increasing it.

Philip Wilson knew nothing of the facts connected with the death of Arthur Vere.

What then ? He did not attempt, even to his own heart, to give an answer ; yet the mere question sent the blood to his heart, and back again.

The following day, Philip did see Augusta, but she did not recognize him. She returned his caresses, but called him sometimes by one name, sometimes by another ; and, looking towards Mrs. Seymour, who stood by the bedside, she spoke to her fondly, as if she had been Henry Lyle.



"This is Philip; are not you glad to see him?" asked Mrs. Seymour.

"Oh, very glad," Augusta answered. "Dear Philip, when did you return? Harry, my darling, Philip is come to see you. Are you well enough to speak to him?"

"I can't stand this," said Philip Wilson, looking very excited; and Mrs. Seymour advised him to leave the room.

Philip did not see his cousin again until her senses had returned, and he was told that she was calm and anxious to meet him. He was surprised at finding her so placid. He had expected, at least, an outburst of tears; but although in speaking of her Lyle—a subject she never strove to avoid—her eyes glistened as they had done during his lifetime, there was no outward manifestation of grief—nothing like the sorrow when Lyle's health had first become unsettled.

She spoke that day of him, and of him only, in the same endearing terms she had ever used with regard to him; and she spoke of him as being, not as having been.

Philip turned his face away from his cousin, and his kind heart overflowed at his eyes.

Augusta saw it, and drawing him towards her by the hand, she put her arm round his neck—such a little, thin arm, that Philip almost shuddered as he saw it—with sisterly fondness, and embraced him.

"Do not grieve for my sorrow, my dear brother," said she. "It was a sad thing to be parted from him, and to think how long that parting may be; but it is only an outward separation, and soon, perhaps, even that may be at an end."



Wilson looked in her face as if he feared her mind had been overwrought and was wandering; but she smiled, and returned the glance so openly and confidently that there was no room for such suspicions left.

From that hour, all visionary thoughts of love were dead in Philip's bosom; he would as soon have offered passion to an angel, or have wooed his neighbour's wife. As a brother, indeed, Philip watched over and cared for and loved Augusta, attending upon her continually, talking with her of him who was never dead to her, but only "gone before."

To the end, Augusta never knew the mighty struggle which had been in Philip's noble heart; he had unselfishness sufficient to conceal even his victory over self. Together they hoped and looked towards that personal meeting which was one day surely to take place; together they pursued the works of former days, neglecting neither body, soul, nor mind; together they learned to love all men for the sake of "Him who would have all men to be saved," and together walked upon the road to heaven.

THE END



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